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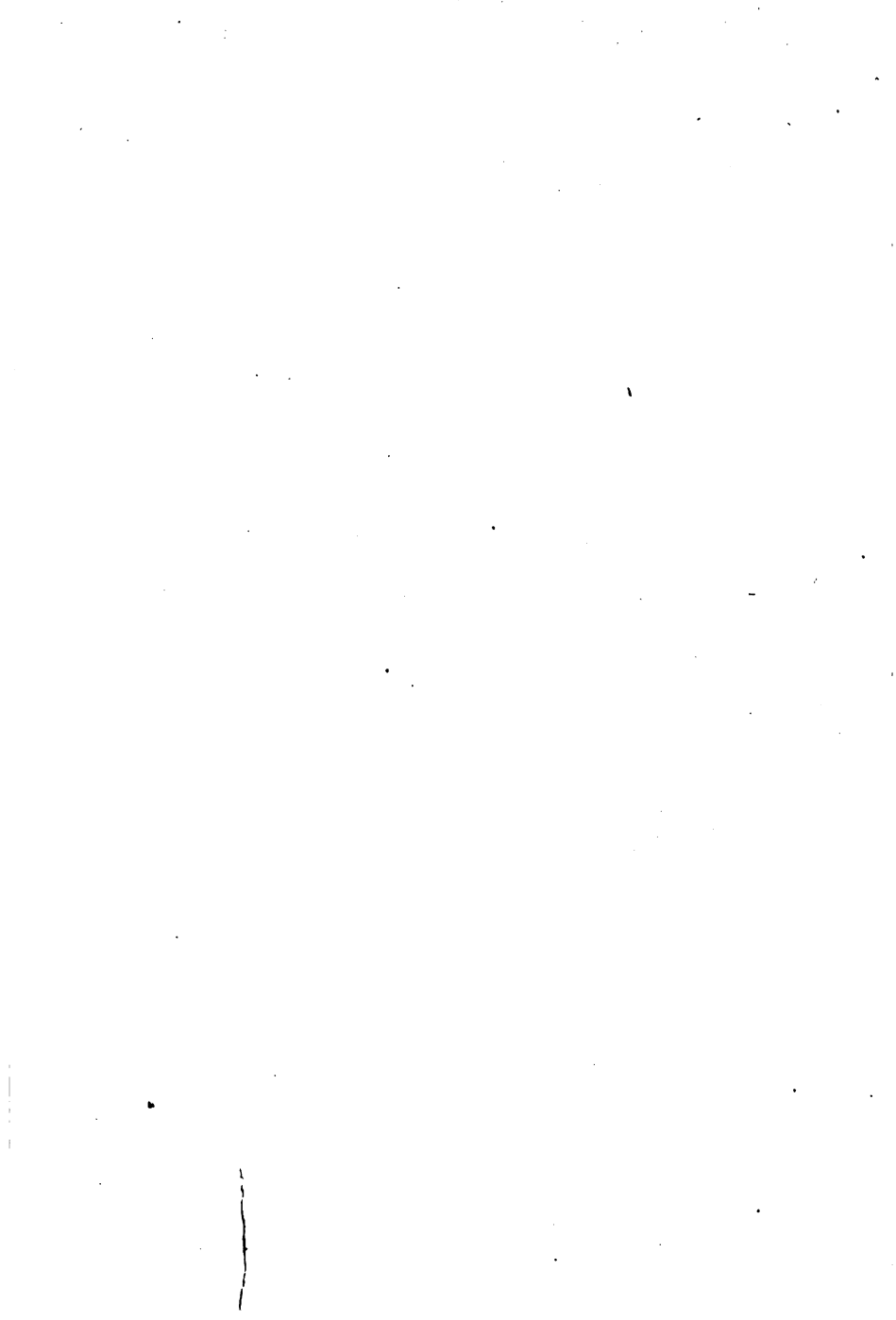
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THE INCANDESCENT LILY
AND OTHER STORIES

W O H 19 FEB '36



**THE
INCANDESCENT LILY
AND OTHER STORIES**

BY
GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

AUTHOR OF

"IT, AND OTHER STORIES," "THE PENALTY," ETC.

**NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

1914

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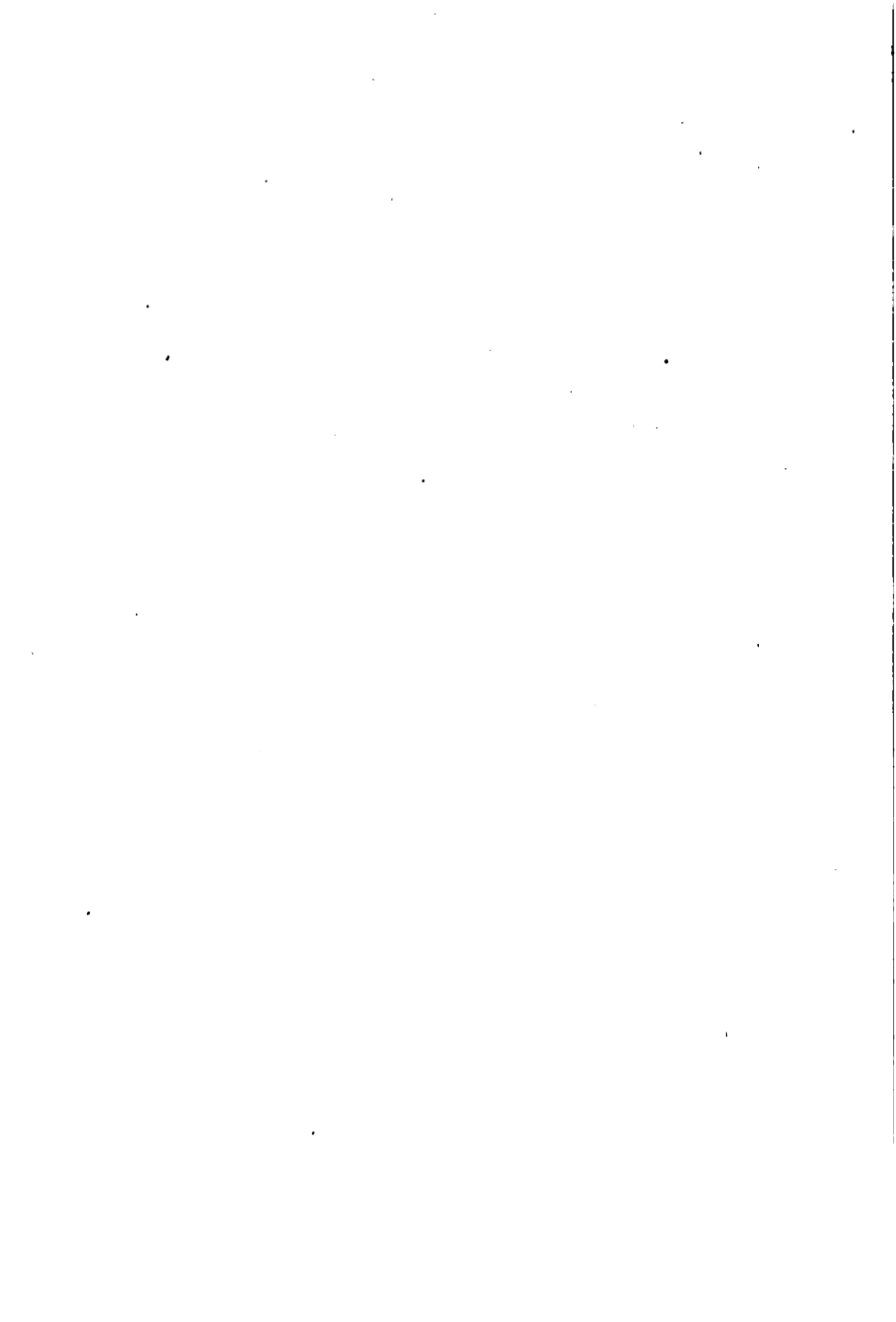
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"Find out who the girl is and tell her she mustn't."

"Maybe she's got money!"

"Maybe she isn't a girl!"

"Not a girl! There are only two reasons for going to Boston—one is to see a girl and the other is to see a football game; so when a man goes once a week it's to see a girl, because the football only happens once a year."

"Does he get off the train at the South Station?"

"At Back Bay. I know this because I had my man slip a dollar to a porter on the one o'clock and tell him to find out."

"Then it's the right kind of a girl. So far, so good!"

"But, good Lord, Chud can't marry! He owes his shirt. I know, because I lent it to him."

"Oh, that shirt! But he has a really smart shirt that I lent him——"

"Which, combined with the amethyst sleeve-links I didn't lend him, but which he borrowed from me——"

"Are we playing poker or gossiping? Who dealt?"

Coles reached for a deck and shuffled it with a quiet, swift, and miraculous precision.

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"No man ought to lay a girl open to the suspicion that she is being married for her money," said Challis.

Legacy Pelham lifted his fine head, which resembled that of a very young and beautiful Roman emperor.

"Chud," said he, "would never marry a girl he didn't love. You boys like to knock him because you are rich and idle and time hangs heavily on your hands, but—you may take it from me—Chud has precious qualities that we all lack. He has imagination, and he would lay down his life for what he thought was right."

"He laid down his last dollar for what he thought was right—and he was wrong." Having spoken, Stairs, with imperturbable gravity, looked on the faces of the five cards which had been dealt him. Pelham did likewise, but spoke the while.

"Believe *me*," he said, "there is something fine in laying down your last dollar. Yes, there is. And Chud's that kind of man. We're not. We're pikers. Dum Dum there, he goes to the races with a satchelful of money. And he drops twenty thousand dollars without changing a hair. And everybody says: 'My! What a nerve! Isn't he the thoroughbred!' Why should he change a hair? Twenty thousand dollars to Dum Dum is no more than a nickel is to a day-laborer. Does this one groan and beat his breast every time



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the conductor collects his fare? Let us have the spectacle of Dum Dum betting every dollar he's got in the world—and losing! I'll bet my last dollar that his charming and stoical countenance would undergo a sickening change. Yes, it would. You may take it from me."

"Shut up," said Dum Dum, "and play cards."

"How many?"

"Thanks," said Mr. Pelham, who sat on the dealer's left. "I'll play these."

Ten minutes later Cunningham came into the Rest House and interrupted the game.

"Seen Chud?" he asked.

"No. Is he back?"

"Yep. And he's got a job."

"In Boston?"

"Yes and no."

"Matrimonial?"

Cunningham seated himself, and, because he had knowledge which the others had not, he affected a wise and superior look. "Shall I tell you what he's been doing all winter?"

"It's not a girl?"

"No! Guess."

"Well, he's gotten in with a crowd that don't play poker as well as we do."

"Wrong."

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"He's——"

"Shut up—here he is."

The advent of Chudder himself only produced a momentary hush. His fellow members of the Rest House feared no man—neither his feelings nor his tongue.

"Hope she'll always be all you think her," said Dum Dum. "Are the cards out?"

"Make it a country wedding."

"Yes. I thought you knew I had to eat my high hat after the Yale-Harvard ball game."

"Seems to me he looks gentler than he used to."

"Is it true, Chud, that you've gotten so that you eat out of the hand?"

"Say, Chud, it's not a guilty love, is it?"

Chudder, a slim, well-set-up young man, had turned his alert head from speaker to speaker, smiling in a superior and annoying way.

"If," said he at last, "you really thought there was a girl mixed up in my sudden passion for Boston and the Bostonians you wouldn't say the things you say—now, would you?"

"Look here," said Dum Dum, "get down to facts. Why you go to Boston and what you do when you go there doesn't excite anybody's curiosity—you being a person of no importance—so you may as well tell us all about everything. If there's a bag with a cat in

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it, let the cat out, and then we can turn our attention to more interesting things."

"I wish," said Chudder wistfully, "that you weren't all in such a flaying mood. Why I go to Boston—what I do when I get there—these things are very important to me. And the time has come for laying them before my friends—if I have any—and asking for help."

Dum Dum slapped his pocket check-book upon the table and in a brutal voice said:

"How much?"

Chudder paled a little and looked Dum Dum steadily in the eyes until the latter's wavered, and not without shame fell to studying the check-book.

"If you must know that detail first of all," said Chudder, "I want ten thousand dollars; but it isn't for me—exactly."

"It seems to me," said Legay Pelham gently, "that if we were to let Chud talk along a little, and tell his own secret, we should find out what we are all affectionately curious to know much quicker than if we do all the talking ourselves."

Chudder gave the speaker a grateful glance, and then, seeing that the rest were for a wonderful once all silent, he said gravely:

"There is a girl!" Dum Dum started to speak and Challis silenced him with a frown and a head-shake. "But," continued Chudder, "she doesn't take me to

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Boston. She sends me. She's a New York girl. And she told me all about myself—all the things you fellows know—how I live from hand to mouth and don't pay my bills until convenient, and am, in short, just as worthless and footless as the rest of you, but without the money that you have for an excuse. This girl would marry me if I was any good. And so I go to Boston whenever I can; and I'm trying to learn something, so that some day I may be somebody. Did any of you ever hear of the Arboretum?"

"Sort of a Boston Central Park?"

"No—just the opposite," said Chudder. "Central Park has a great deal to do with politics and nothing to do with botany. The Arboretum has a great deal to do with botany and nothing to do with politics."

"And it's in Boston, Massachusetts?"

"Not quite. And it's chartered for a thousand years—nobody can sell an inch of it. The man who knows most about trees and flowers of any man in the world, and how to place them to the best advantage, has given an average lifetime to it; and even in winter, when there are no flowers or leaves, it's beautiful. There are four botanical gardens in this world. There's one in Chile; there's one in Java; there's Kew; and we've got one—the Arboretum. And we're such a dense, stupid people we don't even know we've got it!

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"We think it's a sort of Boston Central Park! It's not that. It's national and it's international. And out of China and far places it brings new plants that may be useful to white men—to their eyes or to their pockets. These plants it distributes among individuals who are interested, among the States and among the nations. And it does all this for the two best reasons in the world—for the love of beauty and for the love of being useful. Central Park, indeed! Keep off the grass!

"Like everything else that's worth while, it's poor as Job. Harvard calls for a new dormitory, and wealthy graduates are knocked down in the rush to present her with one. The fortunate man gets his name printed over the front door, and his memory lives until the building—Brown Hall—becomes obsolete and is pulled down, when Smith Hall rises to take its place. But the man who will give the Arboretum a million dollars, his name will be remembered for a thousand years—and maybe for a million! They haven't any money."

"Pardon, Chud, but where do you come in?"

"You might think they wanted money more than anything else; but they don't. They've got a new peach up there—as if one peach wasn't enough for a world of sin—a new peach with only a little bit of a wee, smooth stone—*Prunus Mira*. This will cross

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with the old peach, and there will be a new and wonderful fruit. And if the Arboretum had to choose between the new peach and a million dollars it simply wouldn't consider the money at all."

"Get out!"

"I know what I'm talking about! I haven't spent three days a week there for—for the best part of my life for nothing."

"You spoke of ten thousand," said Dum Dum, "and now you've climbed to a million."

"The ten thousand," said Chudder quietly, "is for an expedition to central China—they want to send one and they haven't got the price. China has only been scratched. There are thousands and thousands of new species—waiting for the lucky man to come along."

"But I thought you wanted the ten thousand."

"You see," said Chudder, "if I raise the money they will let me be the expedition."

"But suppose you discovered a new kind of plant, how would you know it was a new kind of plant?"

"They think I would. I've worked very hard—in their library—in their herbarium, walking about with them through the plantations, and sitting at their feet to learn. I'm to go out by way of Kew, and I'm to work there as a sort of privileged under-gardener and learn all I can. And then China——"

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"How do you know you won't be boiled in oil or have your head chopped off?"

"How long will you be gone?"

"Oh, ever so long—several years."

"Hem! Isn't that a little rough on the girl?"

"We couldn't be married now," said Chudder—"even if I was some account. She's only a kid. It will be all right when I come back. She says so."

"If she isn't able to wait for Chud," said Legay Pelham gravely, "she isn't worth having; and Chud is by way of making a distinguished man of himself. So he can't lose in any event."

Mr. Pelham took a narrow check-book from his inside pocket.

"My dear Chud," he said, "I wish I had your chance. I wish I knew an aster from a chrysanthemum. I wish I had even the wish to count for something and was able to read scientific books and improve my mind. At least—it just happens—I've had a little windfall; it will give me real pleasure to let you have all or any part of the money you need."

"Me, too," said Challis.

"Count me in," said Stairs.

And three minutes later the members of the Rest House had shared equally among themselves the cost of Chudder's prospective expedition.

"I wish you'd tell me one thing, Chud," said Pel-

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ham—he wished to break that awkward silence that always occurs when money is generously given and gratefully received—“how did you ever hit on this way of making good?”

“Oh,” said Chud, “when it’s a question of a girl, I suppose a man’s mind just naturally runs to flowers; and then I always did like gardens. Then I got really interested and then excited; and then it seems I’ve got a natural eye and memory for plants. And that’s how it came about.”

“Are we to know her name?”

Chudder shook his head.

“I might not make good,” he said.

Later Chudder and Dum Dum left the Rest House at the same time, bound for a game of rackets.

“Look here,” said Dum Dum, “if you get boiled in oil out yonder I’ll find a million dollars for your old Arboretum and give it in your name.”

They walked along in silence for a couple of blocks.

“Dum Dum,” said Chudder, “I think I ought to tell you: the girl that’s promised to wait until I’m a man is your kid sister.”

“Get out!” said Dum Dum gruffly.

“I hope you won’t mind too much—if I make good.”

Dum Dum, utterly indifferent to other people, stopped short in the middle of the sidewalk, blocking traffic, took his slight friend by the shoulders, shook

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him with violence, and—so loud that a mournful dog on the other side of the avenue began to bark and yap—shouted:

“If you get boiled in oil I’ll make it two million!”

Then he roared with laughter as if he had said something very funny indeed.

II

Now Dum Dum was very fond of his kid sister and very proud of her. If she had really wanted to marry the bootblack round the corner, he would in the end have given his consent; but he was her guardian and it seemed proper to him to take a severely critical interest in everything she did. Himself the most extravagant of men, he scolded her once a month for extravagance—and increased her allowance just as soon as he had succeeded in making the corners of her mouth droop.

Engaging herself to Chudder, however, was the most serious and extravagant thing she had ever done, and Dum Dum actually thought the matter over before speaking to her about it. His usual practice was severe language followed by tender thoughts and deeds. When he thought before speaking, his language, though less severe, was more to be dreaded. He could be very stubborn.

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Rich girls are not very accomplished, as a rule. They haven't time. Dum Dum found his kid sister seated at an immense grand piano of Circassian walnut. The lights were dim in the music-room, and her face was pensive, almost sad; she was just finishing Sigmund's love-song with intense feeling, and as Dum Dum entered she began: "I want you, my honey—yes, I do."

She played entirely with the forefinger of her right hand.

Halloo, kid," said Dum Dum; "I want to talk to you."

She swung round on the piano-stool and gave him a military salute.

"What have I been and gone and done?" she said.

"I guess you know."

Her face, cut out of a rose, became sphinx-like.

"I bet I don't!"

"Now, don't be defiant! You've been naughty and you ought to be punished. Don't you realize that your face isn't your fortune?"

She rose, crossed the room, studied herself in a pier-glass, and returned.

"With all due respect," she said, "it's part of my fortune."

"You're the most conceited little goat I ever saw!"

"I get it from you," she said. "I'm proud because

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I'm nice-looking, and you're proud because you're ugly and your ears stick out, and because you imagine yourself to be cold and calculating, when, as a matter of fact, you're just a great, quivering heart, shaped vaguely like a man."

Defeated, Dum Dum tried a new tack.

"A man," said he, "who makes love to an heiress while she's still in the nursery isn't my idea of a real man."

"I wasn't in the nursery," she said. "I was leaning over the stairs looking down into the hall."

"You know what I mean."

"And he didn't make love to me!"

"He didn't?"

"My comb fell out of my hair——"

"Did it fall or was it pushed?"

"It fell—after it was pushed—at his feet. He picked it up and said: 'Catch!' I said: 'Don't throw it, please—I might not catch it, and the next time it would fall on the marble and break. Just leave it on the table and I'll come down and get it.' Of course he brought it up to me. I said: 'Do you think you are expected to dinner?' He said: 'To-day's Friday, isn't it?' I said: 'Thursday!' He laughed and said that was just like him. I said: 'Of course you can be one man too many.' He said: 'God forbid!' I said: 'Have supper with me in the children's dining-room.'

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He grinned and said: 'Really?' Only he didn't—he said: 'Weally?' And I said: 'Weally and twooly!' And so we had supper; and after supper—when you'd finished dining—he went down-stairs and 'dropped in casually.'

"The next time I saw him I remembered what you always say about poor men making love to rich girls, and I was bound nothing like that should ever be said about him—and in addition it was leap-year. And so I just told him that it was all right for the present, but I couldn't always be expected to live without him. And I don't think he was in love with me—until I kissed him. Anyway, he began to call himself names. And I told him to buck up and be something; and that, when he was, then we could always have supper in the children's dining-room. . . . I wouldn't tell this to anybody but you. But when you come round saying my man isn't a man it makes me mad. Now he's going to China, and when he comes back I'll be of age, and you won't have any authority over me whatsoever—and Dum Dum, you're not going to make a row and forbid the banns, are you?"

Her hands were on his shoulders and her appealing, anxious voice melted him.

"I'm going to forbid him to go to China!" choked Dum Dum. "Get his silly head boiled off——"

"Dum Dum," she said, "it's awfully real. When I

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was a tiny—just able to walk—and you were only kids, you brought him home from school one day; and I've loved him ever since—and prayed for him every night—just the way I've always prayed for you."

Tears came into Dum Dum's eyes, which he imagined to be inscrutable and flint-like.

"Every night of my life!" she said. "Ever since I could 'listhp' I've prayed God to make you and Chudder better men." Dum Dum burst into a roar of laughter. "And there's no earthly use your worrying yourself about all this—no use saying that I just think I love him. Time for all that when he comes back from China. And you won't go out of your way to be unpleasant to him, will you? Just be an old dear and let things work out in their own way."

She turned a little toward the piano and played a few notes, always with the one finger; and she said demurely:

"*He* says I have a lovely touch."

III

Dum Dum talked the matter over with Mrs. Dum Dum.

"You don't know Chud quite as well as I do," he said; "but what do you think? Can a man that's been knocked round as he has ever really come to time

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and put up a fight? Isn't this flower-show business just another fancy way of evading real work? Is it his idea to make sacrifices and labor while the kid is growing up; or is travelling in China the most agreeable way he can think of for passing the time? I wish I knew, because——"

"You didn't read 'The Life of an Orchid Hunter,' did you?"

"Of course not. Why should I? All a man needs to know about orchids is how much they cost, and who he's sending 'em to."

"But you've read 'Treasure Island'?"

"Every October for the last twenty years."

"Well, the orchid-hunter man had a much more exciting time. He got hold of an orchid—and he starved for it, and had yellow fever for it, and was half-murdered for it and left for dead in the jungle. And he tracked down the man who had stolen it and half-murdered him! And he was nursed by a beautiful girl; and it turned out that she was the wife of a rival botanist, and was only trying to find out where he had hidden the orchid. And at last he got safely to London with it, and a rich man stole it from him; and he went into partnership with a thug and they chloroformed the rich man and his wife in their Louis XV bed and got the orchid back. And—oh, you'd better read it if you think Chud is choosing the easiest life possible.

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And—just think!— he may find something really new and wonderful!”

They were interrupted by Chud himself. He came in all on fire with energy and hurry.

“I’m sailing to-morrow!” he cried. “It’s just been decided! And I’ve come to say good-by—‘it may be for years and it may be forever!’ ”

“Don’t hand out that line of talk to the kid,” said Dum Dum, “because if you do she’ll go with you!”

Mrs. Dum Dum smiled and spoke.

“I’ve got a scheme,” she said.

Dum Dum groaned.

“When you get to China,” continued his better half, “you go up country—don’t you? Yes. And you stay there until you’ve found something worth while; then you come down to the sea; and then you cable us that you are sailing on such and such a date—and, behold, we jump into a car and meet you in San Francisco!”

“If the kid hasn’t forgotten all about him!” shouted Dum Dum gleefully.

“Who’s forgotten all about whom?”

The kid sailed into the room on her merry little feet and suddenly flung her arms round Chudder’s neck.

“It isn’t so much to please you,” she said, “as to

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annoy Dum Dum. And I know you're going to make good; so what's the use of waiting? Take me along, please!"

"Even between lovers," said Chudder sadly, "a bargain is a bargain; but if you forget me I don't really know what I shall do!"

The kid turned to her sister-in-law.

"Isn't there more chance of his forgetting me?" she said.

"In a civilized country," said Dum Dum, "yes; but in China! Ever see pictures of female Chinese peasants? Look here, Chud, just what is it you expect to find?"

"Oh, new things under the sun."

"Nothing special?"

Chudder smiled.

"Oh," he said, "I shall always keep my eyes open for climbing apple-trees, and blue roses, and incandescent lilies."

"Chud," said the kid, "I don't mind your keeping your eyes open; but please keep your heart shut, so that what's in it already can't spill out."

"For Heaven's sake," cried Dum Dum, "don't make love in public!"

"We were hoping that you would leave us," said the kid; "but as you don't and as time flies——"

"I consider that most delicately put," said Mrs.

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Dum Dum, and she drew her husband's arm through hers. And they vanished.

"Is it really for to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear."

"And maybe for years and years?" He smiled, but said nothing. "It isn't funny."

"A man who's been footless has to pay."

"And I have to pay, too! Oh, Chud, I'm weakening something awful. I don't want you to go! Can't you chuck it and make good here? Or—or just stay here and don't make good? I don't care. It's not active deeds and records I want—it's you! . . . With you 'way off there the sun won't shine here, the flowers won't open, the brooks won't flow, and the music won't keep time, and it will always be too hot or too cold. And I'll be hungry or have eaten too much. And nothing will ever be just right again—until you come back."

"Honey heart," said Chudder, "I want you to promise me one thing."

"I've promised to love you always—isn't that enough?"

"That's the promise most often made in this world—and most often broken. Your mind can't promise for your heart."

"Mine can. And if I stopped loving you you'd never know—if you still loved me. I'm not an Indian giver."

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"The promise I want you to make is one that you can keep by willing to. It's about the Arboretum."

"But you know I'm jealous of the Arboretum!"

"They've been good to me. And if anybody in this world stands for the ideal and the beautiful they do. And I want you to promise that if anything happens to me you'll see to it that they don't have to go on for the rest of time eating up their minds and hearts trying to raise money."

"Give money to the thing that I've already given you to?"

"Yes—please!"

"Oh, very well!"

"Do you promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"You see," he said very gently, "if you and I are to be happy it will be because of trees and flowers. And, my own dear, if we are to be unhappy let me tell you this great secret—that the only peace and the only comfort in this world for broken hearts is trees and flowers. If anything happens to me, you turn to them."

"If you say one word more about things happening to you——"

"I won't. It had to be said—but not any more."

"I suppose I run no risks! I suppose if you heard I'd died of chicken-pox you'd comfort yourself by shining up the nearest climbing apple-tree!"

Then they both laughed.

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"If," she said, "you discover anything particularly new, will you name it after me?"

He looked her in the eyes for a long time. And then his whole face twinkled and he said:

"Prunus Kid-O."

"What's that?"

"That," he said, "is a new kind of peach."

"And that," she said, tears in her lovely eyes, "I suppose your old Arboretum would call *Kissus Speciosum*—just any old kind of a kiss."

"Yes," he said; and then he added:

"You have kissed me back from the gates of hell;
You have kissed me back to the Eden tree;
You have kissed me up to the face of God,
And a world of men shall hear of me!"

IV

Chudder's progress in botany—from zero up to the command of the Chinese expedition—was, on the face of it, amazing; in fact, it was not to be understood until you remembered that he was a man who never forgot anything, and that he had the eye which not only sees clearly but photographs and files for reference in one of the brain's great galleries what it has seen.

He could walk through a strange street for a number

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of blocks and repeat in their proper order the names of the shops he had passed. It was never necessary for him to read his favorite books over. Beginning with the Bible—for like many another lazy fellow Chudder was the product of a church school—he could repeat to himself a very good slice of the world's best and worst literature. People he saw in detail; he remembered, without trying to, imperfections in the varnishing of boots and the devices on sleeve-links.

And so, when he got his mind to working on plants he remembered with ease precisely what they looked like and in just what minute ways one differed from another. Also their appalling but necessary Latin names stuck in his head. And, best of all, he had studied under men who keep what they think pretty much to themselves and speak only what they know.

At first the authorities of the Arnold Arboretum were inclined to make a joke of Chudder. Indeed, the tip-most-top authority, who can distinguish anything that grows, in winter or summer, at a greater distance than it can be seen by the average human eye, and who has to give so much precious time to ways and means and worrying about the future, was too busy to be more than hastily polite—at first. But the man who has introduced more new species to Occidental civilization than any other botanist that ever lived was always ready to answer questions. And the other authority,

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whose place of business is in an inadequate greenhouse where he induces the shyest specimens to multiply and increase, was always ready to crack a joke at his expense. And they became firm friends.

Chudder hung about the inadequate greenhouse and the dilapidated cold-frames, where so much is being done for beauty and knowledge, and became gradually a privileged character.

One day they were sending to the great gardens at Kew a hundred and sixty species, brand-new to those gardens, and Chudder helped nail the cover on the case. And one day as he was standing idle the emperor of the greenhouse thrust a ball of dirt and roots into his immaculate hands and told him to look well and remember, for outside of China it was the only one of its kind in the whole world. And from these small beginnings he learned gradually the ways of greenhouses, and how plants are prepared to live long lives or to go long journeys, and are cured of ills that vegetables are heir to.

Friendship between Chudder and the emperor of the greenhouse came in this way.

"Of all the plants you've ever handled," said Chudder, "which is your favorite?"

"The early beet!" said the emperor.

And Chudder's mouth watered, for of all plants he had ever handled that was also his favorite. And he

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told the emperor. And they shook hands upon the matter.

"When two men," said the emperor, "love the same woman they hate each other. But when they love the same turnip they love each other. Why is that?"

And here was another bond between them, for neither of them could explain.

Next, the man who was always willing to answer questions began to notice Chudder—to this extent: Chudder never asked a given question twice. Once assured as to the nature, name, habits, and habitat of a given plant, the facts remained in his mind, near the surface, ready for use. And perceiving this the answerer of questions began to take pains with him and presently to speak of him to the highest top authority as "promising and in earnest."

As his knowledge of plants increased, love for them was born in Chudder. And the rest was easy. The man who wrote of an "Attachment à la Plato for a Bashful Young Potato," or a "Not Too French French Bean" knew what he was talking about. There was a certain little barberry that Chudder loved like a child; it had the sauciest little branches, and little, wee thorns that it evidently imagined to be terribly dangerous and threatening. One very cold night he almost worried himself sick about that barberry—it

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slept in such a very exposed place. And even if they did think it was quite hardy, he didn't! And he could hardly wait for spring to see his favorite put out leaves and bloom, and adorn its saucy arms with berries. And he dug into tough books and spent hours over the dried specimens in the herbarium; and gradually the authorities, seeing how in earnest he was, went more and more out of their way to put knowledge in his.

And, at last, one day in spring he and the Head met by accident among the hawthorns, that had been brought from every part of the world so that they might have the pleasure of seeing each other bloom and fruit; and the first thing Chudder knew he was answering one kind question with the entire story of his life—and the next thing he knew he was being told to keep on as he was going, and that in the near future he would be a botanist to reckon with. And they sat on a wall; and for the Roland of his life Chudder had the Oliver of the Arboretum's. But it was more like the life of a man than the life of a garden; for it was full of grim struggles to make two ends meet, and dreams pigeonholed for want of money, and perseverance in the face of odds, misunderstandings, and selfishness.

"And they think," said the Head, "that it's just a sort of Boston Central Park!"

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But Chudder stood up for Central Park.

"You can't get away from the fact that it has more Queens of the May to the square inch than any other park in the world; and the squirrels will eat out of your hand. To have accomplished even this with unlimited means was worth while. And, besides, it inspired Davis to write about a walk up the avenue, and about Van Bibber's voyage in the swan boat."

The Head laughed.

"The real reason," said Chudder, "why money in bales isn't showered on the Arboretum is simple. Look at this institution and that! Why do they get so much money? Because they'd rather have the money than anything else. It's their end—not their means to an end. With you, it's different. If I had the root of a blue rose—a fringed gentian-blue rose—in one pocket and a million dollars in the other, and you could have your choice——"

"Fringed gentian blue," said the Head, his eyes shining, "I think, single—with the habit, foliage, and vigor of the Cherokee; hardy in the Atlantic States——"

"Then I am to give the million to a fresh-water college?"

"—Exempt from the attacks of insects——"

Then they both laughed, though for a moment the blue rose had seemed wonderfully real and—if you

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know the glorious white Cherokee—very beautiful, and more to be desired than much fine gold.

V

“Heart of my heart”—so Chudder wrote to Dum Dum’s kid sister—“there will be after this from me to you no letter for ever so long. From the hither bank of the Ting Lo Ting, which I English Rubicon, a messenger goes seaward with this one as soon as it is writ. And we others, being fourteen yellow men and one white, do forthwith cross the aforementioned Rubicon, and do presently lose ourselves among unmeasured mountains and unplumbed valleys.

“He who shall always subscribe himself always all yours has already happened upon new things, divers and sundry—sometimes by following streams of rumor to the springs, their sources; but more often by good luck. One day, to keep from sliding down a mountain, I did clutch a viburnum hitherto unknown; and one supper-time Feng, the cook, dished us some delicious greens—and, behold, ’twas a new spinach! And I, unworthy, have found a new pine, and a mauve lily, and an oak with edible acorns, sweet like little Mr. Chinquapin, and a bamboo that should give a good account of itself in harsh New England, and divers rhododendrons and azaleas; and—item—five cotone-

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asters; item—three andromedas; item—three heaths; an ilex; a barberry; item—and so on.

“So now, having made upon the botanies a mark—however little—we go forth upon the rumor of a valley into which, so deep it is and so steep the sides, no living man has been able to descend; and only now and then the gods drop like shooting-stars into the dark place to solace their hearts with the beauty thereof. And among Chinese gardeners the tale passes that in this valley, of the things that grow, not many are new to man—but all; for it has its own climate and its own soil. And ’tis said that at certain seasons, to those standing upon the brim and looking down upon its strange and misty greens, there rises the most heavenly odor of flowers, so sweet that Wang Lo, who was gardener to Emperor Ming, or to a Ming emperor—I forget which—swooned like a miss in an Early Victorian novel and fell forward into the place.

“I shall not fall, however, remembering how much sweeter are you than all flowers; and I shall find that the reason men have not descended into the valley is not because its walls are steep, but because men are lazy. Or I shall find that there is no such place, or that it is entirely vegetated with sorrel grass or bur-docks. And, anyhow, I shall turn seaward three months from this day and I shall hurry; and—

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“‘I sent the lightning forth to see
Where, hour by hour, she waited me.
Among ten million, one was she—
And surely all men hated me!’”

And Chudder covered some more paper with writing—for her alone—and saw his messenger depart. Then he lighted his pipe and took up his knapsack; and, setting his feet upon one bamboo and his right hand upon another, he crossed the Ting Lo Ting, that roared like many lions. And, having crossed, he took two steps and knelt before a new iris, and rooted it up from between two stones. And he said: “Oh, kid, this is a good omen!”

And they climbed by a rough, steep path out of the valley of the little Ting Lo Ting, and reached, at last, a great uplift of country that stretched away and away in rolling levels, and was bounded at last by chains of mountains that were blue and amethyst and cooled upon their spired heads with snow.

And they went forward for many days through hot noons and cold midnights, through dwarfed vegetation and across beds of shale; and they saw outcroppings of coal and white marble and wild sheep and wild ponies that were hairy as spaniels. And they ate badly and drank worse—for now springs were hot, and now sulphurous, and now brackish, and seldom sweet and very rarely cold.

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Chudder, however, had learned the secrets of Chinese travel, which are: Always appear confident, no matter what the danger; and never fly into a passion over trifles. And he went forward, smiling, upon sore feet, and smacked his lips over eagle legs and sulphur-water, and pretended that every difficulty which arose was precisely what he had expected. And all the while, hungry or thirsty, he kept his eyes peeled for new plants, and his voice and whistle in cheerful tune.

Things were better when they got in among the mountains—sweeter and greener. And there was shade; and there were delicious wild figs and white-breasted pheasants, and thousands and millions of wild strawberries—white and red. And here they had a stand-up fight with a band of wild-eyed mountaineers and thrashed them—and made friends with them—and asked questions about the valley they were searching for; and were laughed at for not knowing so simple a thing—and then were directed to it as casually as a man is directed to the Metropolitan Museum or to General Grant's Tomb.

VI

And Chudder nearly fell in. He had been leading for a long time through a level forest of stunted pines, catching now and then glimpses between tree-tops of

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a jade-colored rock as big as a mountain, and, owing to his interest in the unusual peak, not looking any too carefully for what might be immediately in front of him. So it was that he came to the very edge of the forest floor rimmed with a dense mass of rhododendrons, burst through them, put forth his right foot, and realized, with a gasp of wonder, that his next step—if he persisted in taking it—would be something like two miles long in a downward direction.

He sat backward into the rhododendrons, said "Hi-yil"—it is unknown why—and wiped the sweat from his brow. Then the others came up, and Wang, the interpreter, went forward alone upon his elbows and stomach. Chudder followed him, and they lay side by side, craning their necks and breathing hard.

Two miles away the peak of jade-colored rock towered a sheer mile above the rim of the abyss. Two miles below its roots were lost in an amethystine mist of distances. They were, you may say, on the edge of a vast well, marked for identification by a monolith. Thick silence oozed up to them and they looked down upon the back of a slowly gyrating eagle—and he was but a dark speck.

Unless for discovering a way down, or rather the beginning of such a thing, Chudder's glasses, magnifying twelve diameters, were of no use. A pale mist, spread even like water, filled the depths and kept the

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place's secrets. Others of the party crept forward, and the sun shone brightly on their backs, while the immeasurable valley passed through a swift dusk into the darkness of night.

"I think him tap intestines of earth," said Wang.

"Yes," said Chudder; "but if I don't make out to get down there I'll eat my honorable grandmother's hat."

"I think to-morrow," said Wang, "every man scatter himself hither and yon, and meet somewhere else by appointment, to say if he have found some way down and up again."

"Sure," said Chudder; "it's the way up that counts. Wang, that hole must go below sea-level. It's probably full of water."

As if to contradict him, there came out of the darkening place a wonderfully sweet evening smell of flowers. Instantly Chudder thought of Dum Dum's kid sister and a lump swelled in his throat. "Better beat it back to water," he said presently, "and camp."

With the simple comment, "Good water heap scarce!" Wang drew back from the perilous edge of things and rose to his feet.

The whole party was excited and elated. Until late at night the staccato voices of the coolies were never silent, while Chudder and Wang, smoking more than

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was good for them, made heartfelt plans for the morrow.

Then followed three days of utter discouragement. Without miles and miles of rope, a derrick, and a donkey-engine, there seemed but one possible way down—namely, to jump.

And the next morning Chudder woke nauseated, his head wickedly aching, and with a heavy, sickening-sweet smell in his nostrils. "Wang," he said, "are you there?"

And even as he spoke he realized that he was not lying out under the open sky, but under a ceiling of chestnut-red lacquer and upon many thick skins of beasts. He sat bolt upright and then staggered to his feet. His face felt curiously naked. He lifted his hand to his chin and found that during the night he had been delicately shaved of an eight-day beard. He bent his head and looked himself over—and found that he was arrayed in wondrous pajamas of heavy green silk. He pushed open a sliding window of oiled paper and looked out upon an ocean of purple pansies, their faces all toward him. In the midst of them, like a dark island, funeral cypresses wept over a snow-white tomb. Beyond, staggering his powers of belief, he saw the base of the jade-colored rock, and, looking up, the unmistakable outlines of its top flecked with white puffs of cloud—and, stretching to right and

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left, dim in the distance, the very rim of the abyss into which he seemed to have descended.

"It's a perfectly good dream," said Chudder. "Hi, Wang! Wake me! I'm having a nightmare." There was no answer, and Chudder shouted: "Oh, you, Wang!"

And now a bell tinkled; presently a door opened and there entered a precise little woman in flowery brocades; gray-streaked hair parted in the middle and plastered to the shape of her head; pale eyes behind gold-rimmed eye-glasses; common-sense shoes; and large front teeth like a rabbit's. She reminded him of Miss Prism in the play—"a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education." He was not in the least surprised when she spoke to him with a distinct English accent.

"How are you?" she asked with brisk kindness.

"Not at all well," said Chudder. "I think I must have eaten something——"

"Not yet," she said; "but you shall. My dear sir, you were drugged and brought here in a litter. It just happened that our caravan was coming in with teas and porcelains from the Emperor. It stumbled on your camp and brought you along. The princess has been hankering lately to see an Englishman. And here you are."

"But I'm an American!"

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"Dear me, she won't know the difference in this far-off hole! Could you eat a bite?"

"I'm not sure. I think if I could have a cold tub——"

"At least you have lived in England!" she exclaimed.

"Believe me, Americans also bathe!"

"Now, really! You don't say! Well, in this world there is something new to be learned every minute. In there you will find everything—a pool—soap—towels—wash-rag—tobacco ash, the best possible dentifrice; and when you are quite done——"

"What was the use in drugging me? I wanted to come; a polite invitation would have been sufficient."

"Don't you see, if you knew how to get here you'd know how to get away? So would I—and we could escape together."

"Escape?"

"Believe me, it is quite hopeless. Do you prefer tea or coffee?"

"Tea, thank you." And she whisked out of the room.

Presently Chudder had shed his pajamas and stepped into a pool of ice-cold water.

"If I'm not awake," he said, gritting his teeth, "this will wake me."

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He lay down, gasping; his head cleared, and the last fumes of the drug left him; and he leaped from his bath, all goose-flesh without and sharp appetite within.

VII

A breakfast of tea and muffins and wild honey made a new man of Chudder, and the wonderful brocade clothes that a round-faced valet laid out changed him into a Chinese magnate of great beauty. And to the door of his house they brought a curtained litter of red lacquer and invited him to enter it. This done, they carried him across a field of pansies and into a wonderland of red-stemmed pines, of ferns, and falling water.

At the foot of a fall, which in America would have been called the Bridal Veil, seated upon a rock out of reach of the spray and calmly knitting a wash-rag, was the English lady whose acquaintance he had already made. She rose at his approach and dropped her needles and yarn into an ample work-bag.

"There you are!" she said. "Now, if you'll get out of that thing I'll take you to the princess."

"With pleasure, Miss ——"

"Mrs. Cannon. She's drying her hair at the mouth of the Blowing Cave. It's just up here a bit."

Mrs. Cannon led the way briskly, placing her com-

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mon-sense shoes with the skill and certainty of a trained climber.

"Does the princess speak English?"

"To be sure she does. I brought her up. But I regret that she has renounced the church I taught her to embrace and returned to the infidel beliefs of her countrymen—such as ancestor-worship and—love at first sight."

"Is she young?"

"The Princess Lo is seventeen."

And therewith Mrs. Cannon knelt and in a business-like way touched her forehead three times to the ground.

In the full sunlight at the mouth of a little cave, in pale mauve brocade, her black, coarse hair loosed and falling about her face and shoulders, there sat a diminutive and slender girl with bright black eyes that slanted upward at the outer corners, and a deep dimple in her left cheek.

Her hair moved in the drying draught that came out of the cave. Otherwise she was motionless, her hands clasped about her knees, her face inscrutable. She looked like a little child pretending to be Buddha.

Upon the ground beside her was a box of gold lacquer, open, and filled with immense round pearls—pink and black. The princess had been playing marbles.

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She looked at Chudder for a long time. Then she said:

"Please go away, Mrs. Cannon. I want to be alone with him."

Chudder, feeling nervous, advanced two steps.

"My hair," said the Princess Lo, "is not hanging about my shoulders. It is done up in the latest fashion and with the most gorgeous butterflies. It wouldn't be proper for you to see it down. Do you think it is pretty?"

"Indeed I do," said Chudder; "but if you've just washed it, won't that draught give you cold?"

"No," she said, "it won't. Come and sit down. Not beside me! I should have to twist my neck to look at you."

He selected a rock and sat facing her, his eyes a little puckered with wonder and amusement.

"They were afraid you would eat me," she said; "but I wasn't. And I sent them all away. We are quite alone. I have never been alone with a man before. It is very agreeable. What is your name?"

"Chudder."

"And what is your honorable business?"

"I collect plants—new kinds."

"You have come to just the right place."

"But I didn't come. I was brought."

"Does your head ache?"

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"It did."

"I am sorry. Is it true that you are not an Englishman?"

"Quite true."

"That is a pity. My head merchant had a standing order to bring me a good-looking, lively Englishman. And he has brought you! Never mind. A few drops of boiling oil down the back of his neck—Now, tell me, as Americans go, are you good-looking and lively?"

"The latter, I believe," said Chudder.

"What is the difference between an Englishman and an American?"

He explained as well as he could.

"Then I think I shall be satisfied with you," she said. "Would you like to comb my hair?"

She took up a great comb of carved ivory; and Chudder, dreadfully embarrassed, but clever-fingered from handling delicate plants, proceeded under constant direction to comb and dry the little lady's hair.

"If they saw us," she said at last, "they would strangle themselves with silken cords. This is the most improper I have ever been. I love it! Are you tired? But remember you are not combing my hair. It is combing itself."

Presently she lifted her hands to her head and

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sighed. "I'm afraid it is dry. Now we shall climb a little higher and I will show you a pretty view."

She leaped nimbly to her feet and began to frisk up the steep path, a delicious flash of mauve. She stopped suddenly and faced him. She thrust forth from her brocades a tiny and shapely foot—bare, the sole protected by a sandal.

"You will observe," she said, "that, according to Chinese custom, my feet have been so deformed by bandaging that I am unable to walk. You will remember, therefore, in after years that you carried me up this path. The poor Princess Lo cannot run and leap and dance like the fortunate peasant girls. She has to be wheeled or carried."

She turned, went lightly on, and stopped once more as upon a sudden thought.

"It is wicked," she said, "to tell nothing but lies all the time. You are my guest. It is proper for you to be kissed on the forehead, the cheek, and the chin. And when people ask you, you will lie and say: 'Thus she did to me, according to custom.' It is proper that some of your reminiscences should contain a modicum of truth. So come here!" And she kissed him lightly upon the forehead, the cheek, and the chin. Then she said: "I am getting to like you. You are handsome and lively. Carry me!"

He laughed a little and blushed a little, and set her

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upon his left shoulder—and wished she was Dum Dum's kid sister. A tiny hand upon his shoulder, she steadied herself.

"Say that you like me!" she said.

"I do, princess—ever so much."

"I shall have beautiful robes made for you," she said. "You shall have one the color of moonlight seen under waves. That will be for the night the lilies bloom. I like you more and more! I shall mark the place where you stood when I first saw you by a lump of lapis lazuli—the place where you knelt when you combed my hair by a lump of rock crystals. I shall mark those places for the ages of ages. In my palace I have cushions of eider-down, but I would rather sit upon your strong, bony shoulder. And this is a grave matter, for I am not the kind of girl who takes up with the first stranger who comes along. Not that way—to the left! Oh, but this world is green and beautiful! Now put me down. Now look!"

Have you ever seen the Yosemite Valley? Then imagine yourself in one twice as deep, and not less gentle and serene. Chudder's heart swelled and swelled in his breast.

Afar off among the trees a great bell began to toll slowly and solemnly.

"That is the Bell of All True Lovers," she said.

"When that bell sounds all true lovers in this valley

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put aside their work and write down upon ivory tablets such loving and blessed thoughts as occur to them."

The bell tolled and tolled, and at last ceased. A breeze light and perfumed blew in their faces. The Princess Lo studied his profile.

"Chudder!" she said.

"Yes, princess?"

"Nothing—I keep thinking what a beautiful name it is."

Chudder grinned, for a line of an old song had flashed into his memory:

"'Ow'd you fancy 'Awkins for your other name?"

She possessed herself of his hand and held it a long time. He had the impulse to resist; but so simple she seemed, natural, and naïve, he lacked the heart.

"I shall have you brought to the palace to live," she said presently. "You shall have views of the Jade Mountain and of the Court of Peacocks. I shall do all I can to make you feel at home. And now let us go. If you wish I will walk; but I would rather ride on your shoulder."

Chudder smiled gayly.

"Well, princess," he said, "in that case you've just won a debate."

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And he lifted her to his shoulder; and she laughed like a child and pretended that she was riding on an elephant.

VIII

The next time Chudder saw the Princess Lo she was seated upon a throne of carved teak inlaid with hunting scenes in gold and mother-of-pearl. At her right hand and her left were shallow fragile bowls of white porcelain filled with ivory apples colored to the life. Her little feet rested upon a stool of lapis lazuli. She held between her little paws a great sphere of rock crystal. Her hair was piled high on her head, and butterflies with transparent jade wings had perched upon it here and there.

She was surrounded at a respectful distance by wax-like officials in primrose yellow and gosling green. And there was one priest in scarlet and one in black. Upon the steps that led to the throne a small green monkey was playing with a necklace of huge black pearls.

"Chudder," said the Princess Lo, "you have asked us for an audience. What has troubled you?"

"I wish very much," said Chudder, "to communicate with the rest of my party—to tell them that I am alive, and to order them to wait for me."

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The princess smiled inscrutably.

"They shall be told," she said. "They shall be ordered to wait. What else, my friend?"

"Leave to go freely about the valley to hunt for new fruits and flowers—leave to collect roots and seeds."

"All our fruits and flowers," she said, "save one, grow in the palace gardens. That one which does not, being sacred, is neither to be looked on nor dug."

"But if I should see it by chance?"

"By chance you will never see it."

"But you will show it to me?"

"Hush! Our prime minister imagines that he understands the English language. Do you take me, then, for a sacrilegious person and one who does not know what is proper? And why do you wish to collect roots and seeds?"

"To beautify the gardens in my own country."

"Are you earnest in the intention to return to your own country? Your men shall be ordered to wait for you, Chudder—but they will wait in vain!"

"Am I a prisoner, princess?"

"No such thing, Chudder! The way out of the valley is always open."

"Then——"

"And you have only to find it."

"I am free to look?"

"You are as free to look as the eagle is to fly over

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the sea. And now I am tired of this hard seat and these stiff clothes."

"Princess," said Chudder very sweetly, "why do you wish to keep me against my will?"

The inscrutable sloe eyes betrayed a little mischief and amusement.

"Is it by their will that you dig roots and set them in gardens across the seas? And if the root clasped its hands and said, 'Oh, Chudder, I am not happy here. Let me go back to the Princess Lo's valley, where I am better understood!'—what would you do? You would change its food, its position, its soil; you would do everything you could to make it happy and strong, but you would not let it go. You would keep it until—it died."

"If I am to stay here till I die," said Chudder, "I will spend what remains of life looking for the way out of the valley."

"That is a very rude speech. But you will tire of rude speaking and vain seeking. I am angry with you! Go away!"

For three days the princess sulked and did not send for Chudder. He, meanwhile, made a circle of the cliffs that walled the valley and found them almost as smooth and steep as the inside of a tumbler. And he went to sleep on the night of the third day, very sore and angry. The morning of the fourth day he bota-

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nized sullenly in the palace gardens. Here was much that was new to him, both in species and in garden design. And at moments, forgetting his captive state, he was filled with delight and enthusiasm; at other moments he thought about Dum Dum's kid sister and was very homesick.

In a grove of hawthorns, kneeling, sitting upon her heels and contemplating her Oriental charms in a deep pool, he came suddenly upon the Princess Lo and her little green monkey. The latter, eyebrows closely knitted, was engaged in pulling a thorn from the palm of his left hand.

"Are you still angry with me, Chudder?"

"Yes, princess."

"But you liked me at first—and I liked you. It is a great pity!"

"If you no longer like me, why keep me?"

Here the little green monkey climbed into her lap and fell asleep.

"I kept the monkey," she said, "until he liked me. At first he was all for the wild-woods; but now—you see?"

"If you are going to class me with a monkey——"

"I'm not. You will be harder to tame; but time is a wonderful thing. And now tell me—you have spent three days trying to find your way out of the valley; have you any hope left?"

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"Not much," Chudder admitted, "unless you turn kind."

"But I am exceptionally kind. I wish to be warm friends with you—to make you rich and noble; only, when you pull a long face and show that you think nothing of me, it makes me angry."

"No man likes to be a prisoner."

"You do not like it because I think you are a prisoner in your own country. I have talked with Mrs. Cannon and we have concluded that you are only out on leading-strings and that the American ends are held in a woman's hands. Are you in love, Chudder?"

"Yes," he said. "And now surely you'll let me go!"

She did not answer for a long time. Then she sighed and said:

"Would you be happier if I said, 'A month from now, if you do not wish to stay, I will let you go'?"

His face brightened immeasurably.

"So be it," she said abruptly. "What does she look like? Tell me all about everything."

He sat with her under the hawthorn and told her the story of his life.

And the Princess Lo seemed so interested and sympathetic that Chudder began to like her again. Every day she made him tell her about Dum Dum's kid sister, and he liked her more and more; so they became

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completely at ease with each other and almost inseparable companions.

IX

The belief that he had but to remain firm in his wish to depart at the end of the month lifted a world of worry from Chudder's heart, and he fell to botanizing the valley and to companioning the Princess Lo with immense zest. His one regret was that a place so rich in new species should not have fallen to a man more deserving by years of patience and labor. It was really bad luck on the others that the youngest and most helter-skelter of botanists was about to reap so great a reward of fame. He had the feeling so often experienced by the light-fingered—"It's almost a shame to take the money!"

To describe the vegetable wonders, beauties, and curiosities of that valley would take a mind great in sciences and in imagination. The present writer, alas, is like Van Bibber in the story. "Yes," said Van Bibber, "I think I know a horse when I see one—and," he added mentally, "that's about all!" And so it is with the present writer. He thinks he knows a tree when he sees one—and that's about all; but I have heard Chudder talk and describe, and become exasperated because even he could not find just the right

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picture-painting words—and because it is impossible to describe a taste or a perfume, or the falling of water, or the notes of birds.

“All the open levels,” he told me, “were pansies instead of lawn, and all their little faces were always turned toward you. Brooks moved quietly through them, over white sand and many-colored rocks; and the bottom of the valley couldn’t have been below sea-level, else where did the brooks flow? There were forests of rhododendrons a hundred feet high; and there were monstrous pines, with scarlet stems and foliage like mist; and edgings everywhere to things of azalea and a glorious blue lilac; and the forest floors were infinities of new ferns and broad-leaved evergreens; and there were roses that had the same pleasure in existence and the act of climbing that our own poison-ivy has. There were a dozen crab-apples and cherries that I had never seen before; and high up, always out of reach, where pockets of soil had formed on the cliffs, were flashes and blazes of color, rosy vines that garlanded down a hundred feet—yellow vines. And Nature had so gardened the place that, though it bloomed with every known color, there was never an outrage or a loud swearing. And the place was almost too sweet! You could shut your eyes and imagine yourself at a fashionable wedding—or a funeral.”

“Tell me,” said the Princess Lo one day, “why do

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you wish to give fruits and flowers to people you have never even seen? My world is beautiful all the way to the rim of the cliffs. Beyond that I cannot see. Therefore it may be dust for all I care."

"You," said Chudder, "are rare and charming. When I go away do you think I shall keep that knowledge to myself? Not a bit of it. I shall try to make everybody I meet understand how rare and charming you are. Just so, if I take some beautiful flower home to my country and it grows well there, I shall want it to be in every garden. Why, if I rented a house for a few months and was never to see it again I should still take the trouble to plant things in the dooryard for those who should come after."

"The important thing," said the princess, "is that I am rare and charming!" Chudder laughed. "I do wish I could show *them* to you!" she said.

"Show what?"

"I told you that everything which grows in the valley is represented in the palace gardens."

"And you were wrong. There are dozens of wonderful things here that none of you seem to have noticed."

"You know what I mean," she said, womanlike. "But we have a lily—the sweetest and most wonderful of all our flowers. It is coming into bloom now. I wish you could see them."

"Why can't I?"

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"Because if I showed them to a foreign-devil my soul would be cast into the Lake of Fire for a thousand years."

"Princess," said Chudder, "that is nonsense! And you know it! Come on; show them to me. Be a sport!"

"The Lake of Fire is nonsense," she said. "That my people would stone me to death is known fact. And yet I'd almost risk that to—to give a great pleasure."

"You'll risk nothing of the kind; but you could tell me about them and how to get to them."

"Not how to get to them!" She shook her head firmly.

"How do they differ from other lilies?"

"How do fireflies differ from other flies?"

"You mean they give light?"

"They are the lanterns of the fairy people, and they have all the colors to be found in a rainbow. The leaves and stems are black as ebony and shining."

"You're not joking?"

"I'm telling you about the most beautiful flower in the world—and the sweetest."

"Sweet, too?"

"But you shall smell them even if you aren't to see them—I will bruise one in my fingers and in the morning you shall kiss my hands."

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"But tell me where they grow and let me go by myself."

"They would know that I had told you."

"I shall look for them."

"They are as well hidden as the way to the top of the cliffs."

"But I am to be shown *that* when the end of the month comes."

"If you go out at the end of the month," she said, "it will be as you came."

"Drugged?"

She nodded.

"If you go!"

"But you promised."

"You might want to stay!" He smiled disarmingly and shook his head. "I should not be the first princess to break a promise."

"You would be the *last* princess to do such a thing," said Chudder.

"Oh!" she cried. "You *do* trust me! You *do* think I'm honest, *don't* you?"

"I do! I know!" he said.

"Then it's you who have changed me. When I made that promise I had no intention of keeping it. I thought that if you did not like me enough to want to stay I would have you killed. But now—oh, something has happened to me, Chudder! I couldn't hurt

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you now! Anything you asked for I would give. Yes, even leave of absence—forever.”

Chudder could make no answer.

“Go to-morrow,” she went on, “if you wish. It will hurt me less, perhaps, than if you wait till the appointed time. Oh!” she cried, “I was a spoiled child and you were a new toy; but now I am a woman and you are a man—and there is the difference. To the spoiled child it is what the spoiled child wants; but her will—to the woman—is what the man wants. If it is your happiness to leave me—to live out your life with another—that shall be my happiness!”

And she wept bitterly, like a child that has been hurt; and even as if he had been that child’s father so Chudder took the princess tenderly in his arms and comforted her. At last she freed herself and wiped her teary face with her pink sleeve. Then, looking him in the eyes and exultant with love of him:

“To-night,” she cried, “you shall see the burning lilies. I would rather be stoned than that we should not see them together.”

“But I won’t go with you,” Chudder smiled. “Do you think I’d risk a hair of your head for so small a thing as the sight of a new flower?”

“When you go away,” she said, “I shall have worse things to face than death; but I shall remember always that we two walked hand in hand among the

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burning lilies. . . . Oh, Chudder, couldn't you stay? Couldn't you love me?"

"And if I could," said Chudder, "knowing my story, could you believe that so light and changing a love as mine was worth the having?"

"But when you return, perhaps you will find that she has forgotten you. If she has forgotten you, will you come back?"

Chudder was silent; then, lifting his eyes to the child's and his voice breaking, he said:

"Why, yes! So help me! If she has forgotten I will come back."

X

It was naturally a great disappointment to Chudder that to see the Incandescent Lily was to risk the princess' life. All his discoveries in the valley seemed picayune and comfortless if he was to go away without even a scientific description of its chief marvel; and he lay down sulkily in his lacquer bed and could not sleep for a long time. To sleep was to dream—to dream of petty things blocking a whole world of accomplishment.

At the very altar it was found that the ring would not go on Dum Dum's kid sister's finger. Some one had given him a million dollars for the Arboretum; and for safety he had buried it under one of ten million lilac

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trees somewhere on the way from Portland, Maine, to Poland Springs. The Incandescent Lilies he planted at the Arboretum grew beautifully; and just when they were going to bloom the General Electric Company got out an injunction forbidding them to do so. . . . Then Chinamen came softly into the room—this was a very real dream—and he fought with them; and they got their fingers round his throat and strangled him until he was dead. Yes, it was true about hell, after all—you went down, down; and then you saw the twinkling of the fires—all the colors of the rainbow, and the—But why—in hell—did a cool and perfumed breeze blow in your face? And why were the fires shaped like lilies? And why did not the brooks, which slid hither and thither among them, put them out?

Her arm was round his waist. His dazed head rested against her shoulder. But the breeze and the perfume and the wonder were gathering up the scattered fragments of his mind and putting them together again.

They were sitting on a great platform of rock thrust up from the edge of a level meadow, through which brooks ran slowly. At a distance the many-colored points of fire made him think of New England meadows in June, when the fireflies are thickest; but near at hand he could see that each light was a stately lily that glowed with its appointed color. To give the lilies light and perfume had not been enough, for it seemed

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to Chudder that in mere grace and habit the whole world had no other lily to compare with them. And the ink-black stems and foliage were but an added insult to his powers of belief.

He lifted his head from the Princess Lo's shoulder and drew a deep breath that was like a sob. In the light of the lilies she watched his face. And when she saw the wonder in it fade and the look of the excited collector take its place she sighed.

Suddenly he rose, stepped to the edge of the platform, and vaulted down among the lilies. Then he knelt and with reverent excitement began to dig with his hands. The princess uttered a piteous cry. And then:

"You haven't even spoken to me! And I have risked my life to give my lord's eyes a moment's pleasure!"

From his uncompleted task Chudder rose abashed and ashamed.

"Oh, princess," he cried, "I am sorry!"

"You turn your back on a woman's soul," she cried, "and kneel to a weed!"

He climbed back to the platform, his hands and knees amuck with the rich soil in which the lilies grew, and he spoke humble and contrite words and abased himself. She listened unmoved.

"I thought," she said, "that we should be together

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and look and wonder. I thought, perhaps—but no matter; for it seems that to you these new flowers are only a new species—a thing to make common, to commercialize!”

“Not that last!” he cried. “That is not true. I only wanted to share the most beautiful thing in all this world with all the people in it. If that is wrong——”

“There is one woman in this world who seems desirable to you above all other women. Doubtless, you wish to share her with the servant who brings your tea. Come! This has not been worth the risking of even an unhappy life.”

She clapped her little hands sharply together, and there rose near at hand, as if from so many trap-doors in a stage, four Chinamen in sombre robes.

The breeze rose higher, and the lilies bowed and swayed so that it seemed as if the whole meadow was swept by leaping and drawing flames. The princess shivered. She looked very fragile and tired, and bowed as if the weight of her pearl necklaces, black and pink, was too much for her.

She spoke in Chinese, and one of the four Chinamen went silently to the edge of the platform and leaped down among the lilies. He returned presently—a great black bulb in his hands. He laid it at the princess’s feet.

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Then she began to unclasp her necklaces one after another—the ransom of a dozen kings. And she said:

“It is terrible that a soul should be hurt forever for a thing so material as a man! If I have misjudged you, Chudder, it is because a woman’s heart misjudges—always. A woman does not love a man because he is worthy. She loves him because she loves him. I shall always love you; but life would not be so little to me if I could think that all I have to give had not been utterly wasted and thrown away. I shall never see you again. . . . These pearls—I don’t know how much they are worth—but surely they would put that great institution for which you are collecting beyond the material wants—or you yourself, Chudder. For you could divert the money to yourself and no one be the wiser. So take them as a free gift. They are—merely pearls. Or——”

“Or, princess?” His color was rising.

She flung them on the rock at his feet.

“Or,” she said, “leave them where they lie—for the wild monkeys to play with and the jackdaws to covet; and take, instead, this root——”

And with her little foot she pushed the bulb of the Incandescent Lily toward him.

Of course, Chudder’s decision was instantaneous. To put the Arboretum, laboring unselfishly not for a coterie, a city, a State, but for a nation, for the whole

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world, beyond the material wants—to do this was to do a good deed, a great deed; to have justified his having been born into the world!

And so, knowing well the workings of minds that seek alone to benefit and beautify the world in which they live—and having, indeed, just such a mind himself—he stepped forward, so eagerly as actually to spurn the pearls with his foot, and picked up the bulb of the Incandescent Lily.

Lifted in full flower, carried for thousands of miles to a strange soil and a strange climate, it might never bloom again.

“Oh, princess,” he cried, his face bright with boyish enthusiasm, “may I really take them this?”

Her face was transformed with gentleness.

“They will be so happy and excited!” he said.

“You have a heart of gold!” she said. “I envy her, Chudder; but not now—so that it is all torment.”

She waved her little hand and the four grim Chinamen in their sombre robes sank from sight.

“They will have to drug you, Chudder dear,” she said, “so that you won’t know how you came to this place or how you went away. You will find your own men waiting. If she has forgotten you, you have said that you will come back; but I hope she has not forgotten you, for I think that would make you too unhappy——”

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Afar off there sounded faintly and sweetly the solemn tolling of a bell.

"The Bell of All True Lovers!" exclaimed the princess. "And now true lovers all over the valley are waking and striking lights that they may set down loving and blessed thoughts upon tablets of ivory. . . . I think we are saying good-by for the ages of ages, Chudder. I do not know—but I think so."

The bell tolled on, faint and clear. The sweetness of the Incandescent Lilies came up to them like holy incense. At their feet, blinking in the starlight, the great pearls, black and pink, lay spurned and forgotten.

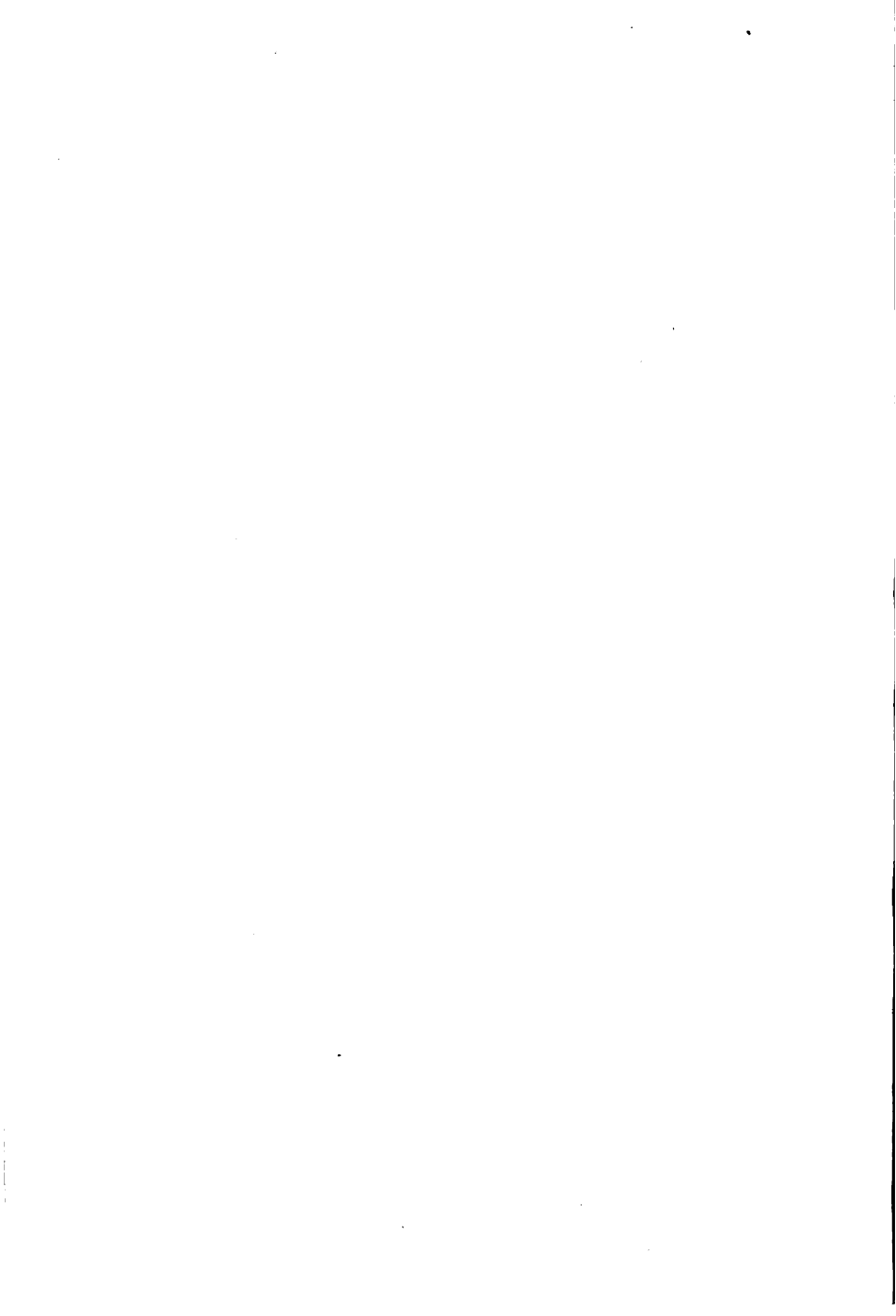
A greater sweetness than that of the lilies came toward Chudder, and for a few moments his pitying arms encircled it and held it close. Then she went away, with little, faltering steps, and never looked back once; and the four sombre Chinamen rose once more, as it seemed from the bowels of the earth, and came forward.

One of them held a white cloth four times folded; and another took from his sleeve a flask of carved rock crystal, and with yellow, pipe-stem fingers drew out its bedragoned stopper.

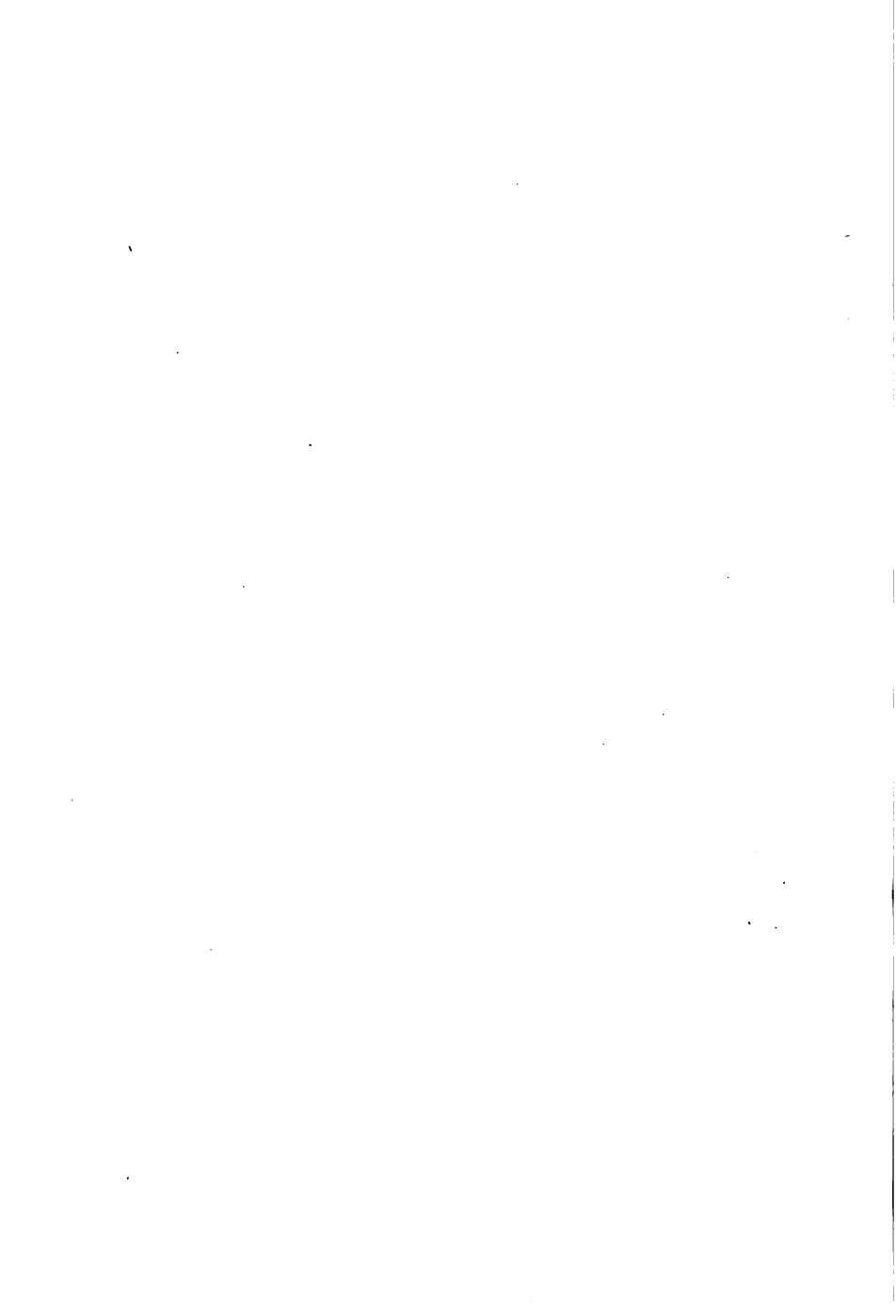
Chudder looked one last time over the meadow of burning lilies. Then the cloth, now dripping and smoking, was laid across his mouth and nostrils; and, choking

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a little, the things of this world—and of that—were
erased from his mind as a wet sponge washes the little,
sorely-wrestled-with problems from a child's slate.



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Outwardly, the Renfrew divorce was a very ordinary affair. Such notoriety as it enjoyed was entirely owing to the prominence of the litigants. But there is an inside story, and I propose to tell this out of friendship for Renfrew. He was one of the very best.

There are two stories to every divorce: the story which is given to the judge—and the truth. The story of the Renfrew troubles as given to Judge Orme was merely that Renfrew had been unfaithful to his wife. And Mrs. Renfrew was granted her divorce and the custody of the child.

Renfrew was one of the best-liked men in New York. His fortune and station had nothing whatever to do with this. He walked straight into people's hearts on the strength of a disposition that was never clouded, of a purpose that was never veiled. Without ulterior motive, he lived to like and be liked. On the few occasions when he was observed to drink too much, his amiability and generosity, alone, became a little exaggerated. He was a man's man, loving his friends, helping them when they weren't looking, and passing no judgments that were not his own upon any one. He was not exactly what we Americans call "bright," but

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he gathered points without difficulty and had the readiest and most unintentionally flattering laugh. For a party to be a "go," it was only necessary that Renfrew should be present. And when he fell in love with Miss Culver it was a tragedy to many bachelors. For they knew that he would play the game of marriage as he had played all other games, fairly and squarely, with tact, with that generosity which welled from him like water from a spring, and according to the letter of the marriage service and according to the spirit. "If she wants him to stay at home nights," we said, "he will stay. If she doesn't want him to go on little shooting-trips he will not go. And because she is a woman she will want the former and not want the latter, and there will be one contagious and heartening laugh the less when the weary business men gather before dinner at the club."

So we prognosticated and so we half-believed. So we fully believed when we lined up with him in St. George's and saw the look on his face and heard the voice with which he spoke the tremendous promises which separate the honest man from his father and his mother and his friends and his clubs.

But we couldn't find it in our hearts to blame him. She was the prettiest thing you ever saw, and had the tenderest, best-bred voice, and was much too young not to be sure of what she was doing. It's your old

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girl that marries by halves, not sheltered sweet-and-twenty.

Well, she was actually younger than she looked but not quite so innocent. She didn't know men; she didn't know women; she didn't know the world. But she knew herself. She knew that, from the first time she had howled for jam until she told them that she wanted Renfrew, her parents had given her everything she asked for. And she knew that almost everything she had asked for in her short, merry life had, almost immediately, upon acquisition, ceased to be desirable. She had given away, without wearing once, more hats and frocks and things than she had ever worn. I don't mean that she was a dissatisfied sort of person—far from it. For the disenchantment of something newly acquired was at once offset by the eager and hopeful desiring of some other new thing. With the wanting of new things, new experiences, new environments, and the knowledge that she would presently get them, she kept happy all the time.

She was very frank about herself with Renfrew. He told me so himself at the time of the divorce.

"Why," he said, "it was hanging over me from the beginning. She said she knew she cared for me and knew she wanted to be married to me; but she said she had never cared for anything after it belonged to her, and how did she know it wouldn't be the same

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with me? It wasn't her fault, she said. She was just made that way. She was sorry, but she couldn't help it. She was giving me fair warning, and, if I still wanted to marry her and take a chance, I mustn't blame her if she turned out to be an inconstant, no-good person."

That was how she put it to Renfrew. And he was quite willing to take his chances.

And when they went to the altar, and for a long time afterward, she certainly loved him beyond belief, with a love that almost reconciled the friends who had lost him to losing him. If he *had* to marry, it was good that he had married her. His marriage, indeed, was such a success on the face of it, the face it wore for several years, that many of us, bachelors by the high cost of living, by principle, or by the complications of selfishness, wondered if another like her might not be found somewhere in the rosebud garden of girls.

Personally, I never felt so sure of a marriage—after it had lasted for two years without any signs of lapsing. I went to the house a great deal—not as an old friend of his but as a new and trusted friend of theirs. I did all I knew to get on her right side and into her good graces—searching my whole nature for those mislaid powers of thoughtfulness with which, like everybody else, I must undoubtedly have been endowed at the time of my birth; praising her gowns and her newest

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acquisitions and her dinners. And I must have succeeded, if only in a small measure, for a time came when she would not see any of her new friends but me, and when, presently, the baby was born I was promoted from the rank of intimate to that of god-father.

She had wanted a baby in the worst way. And when she got it she liked it. But its arrival was a torment which she was unable to forgive or to forget. In all her life she had never, until those interminable, dusk, electric and dawn lit hours, known the least thing about fear and agony. And when these were over it seemed to her that she had lost every shadow of modesty and self-respect. In the midst of it all—between agonies—she had made Renfrew promise that he would never ask her to have another baby.

As if he had asked her to have that one! Or she him! If ever a love-made, undeliberated baby came into the world, it was Miss Beatrice Renfrew. I know that. But I don't know why, the moment she had been christened Beatrice, her parents at once took to calling her Tam.

Renfrew had supposed that his cup of happiness was full. Tam's coming proved him mistaken. It seemed that the happiness of mere marriage was an illusion, and that only the happiness of marriage plus the fruit thereof was real. The great tenderness that he had

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for his wife, even, seemed to be reborn, seemed to be redoubled, and yet left room in him for that new and equally great tenderness which the helpless, alluring, and expressive Tam roused in his breast.

Fathers of more than one child often experience this tenderness, not for all of their offspring but for one of them. And usually the one that needs it the least—for the soundest, strongest-willed one, that is going to get everything, anyway. It is not so often that the father of but one child loves it beyond belief, reason, or common sense. But it was just so that Renfrew loved Tam. They—Mrs. Renfrew and the trained nurse—could do nothing with him. For him, those modern and scientific practices by which infants are put in the way of good citizenship or noble womanhood were barbarous and impious. The idea of letting Tam have her cry out rather than lift her and give her whatever it was she was crying for seemed to him born of just such narrow and brutish minds as raised the Spanish Inquisition to a perfection of injustice and torture.

At first Mrs. Renfrew viewed his infatuation with tolerance.

"Tam," she said, "is the image of me, and so it's all very flattering—if only indirectly.

"But it's enough to have one spoiled baby in the family—meaning me. I was never allowed to cry for anything—long. And behold the result! Everything

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that ought to be fun, now, I had so long ago that there's no fun in it."

We were alone at the table; a crying—pure temper—in the distant nursery having reached Renfrew's acute ears, snatched him from us as if upon the end of a lariat.

"I was just going to say," I said, "that the results of pampering have been so excellent in your case, that if I were Tam's mother I wouldn't have any fears about her. You're a good wife, a good friend, and a good mother. Maybe if you'd been whipped when you were young you would be a wicked adventuress."

"Oh," she laughed, "give me time. If I'm the things you say, which I doubt, it's only because, for the time, I enjoy being them. Just wait until I begin to think it would be more fun to be a wicked adventuress. Nothing, I assure you, will stop me. Well?"

This to Renfrew, who had just returned with a very apologetic but very happy expression on his face.

"She didn't want to go to sleep," he explained, "unless she had her new shoes on."

"And what did you do for her?"

"I distracted her mind," he said darkly.

"Tell the truth."

He broke into that wonderful mischievous-boy smile of his.

"I distracted her mind," he said, "by finding the

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shoes and putting them on for her. And then she went to sleep like a good girl."

"Did you take her thumb out of her mouth?"

Renfrew couldn't lie.

"No," he said.

"If she has protruding teeth it will be your fault."

Mrs. Renfrew turned to me.

"I ask *you*," she said, "what chance has Tam got with a father like that?"

"Suppose," said Renfrew with a sudden gravity, "a father didn't spoil his baby daughter? Suppose something happened to her and all the rest of his life he had to hear her crying for the shoes that he hadn't given her? I never had much imagination. But I've got it now—in *bales*—about that baby. It's no use your scolding *me* and disciplining *me*. I *won't* be good. I dare not."

If I have conveyed the impression that Tam was a spoiled brat, and no more, I have done her a grave injustice. She was the most fascinating, mischievous, witty, and affectionate baby I ever saw, full of whimsical inventions, on the go all day, investigating, destroying, approving, damning, an unmincing truth-teller, and, even to timid bachelor arms, a warm bundle of pure delight.

It seems to me, out of no very great experience of ecstasies, that the greatest ecstasy of all is when a

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female baby, by her own sovereign will and desire, elects to sit in your lap. And I can understand, if only vaguely, what went on in Renfew's heart whenever Tam was in question. The welcomes she gave him after absences! He had but to be gone an hour, to return, to thrust his head in at the nursery door, and then—such sounds of joy as burst upon the air were made in heaven. Sounds more articulate than speech, shrill, rapid as the detonation of a Maxim gun, born of and borne upon the breath of ecstasy! And I have seen Renfew go down upon his knees and open his arms, and I have seen the rushes she has made into them, and I have heard—I hear now—the wonderful, swift pattering of her tiny feet across the nursery floor.

Joy sometimes is so great that it can't be borne. I have seen Renfew get up from his knees, after much skylarking, so happy, so bursting with yearning and tenderness, that it hurt him, and he looked ready to cry. It got so that the care-free, heavy sleeper became a light sleeper, and was up many times in the night, ashamed, flooded with love and anxiety, moving upon tiptoe across the hallway to the nursery door, there lingering, listening, and imagining.

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II

I had just returned from the opera, where I had put in a very pleasant evening listening to an English-woman with red hair telling stories to a boxful of people. I was still laughing about her, when the telephone bell rang, and I heard, presently, Renfrew asking if I would mind sitting up a little longer as he wished to see me about something very important.

I had my man light a fire and put out drinks. Then Renfrew came, nervous, ill at ease, and in no hurry to come to the point.

This made *me* nervous. And for some time we fought shy of any topic of the slightest interest. We talked stocks, fire insurance, and the widening of Fifth Avenue. Renfrew had two drinks and kept warming his hands at the fire. Twenty minutes passed. Then he broke off abruptly from something that he had started to say, drew a couple of quick breaths, and for the first time sat down.

"I came to tell you a lot of things," he said, "and I'm shy about starting."

"I see you are. But you needn't be."

"It's all very intimate and awful," he said. "Do you mind?"

"Go ahead."

"Ellen wants to divorce me."

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"What's that?"

"Divorce me—that's all."

"Will you please tell me why?"

"Yes," he said, "I will. I've been a good husband to her. I've never neglected her. I've made love to her ever since I fell in love with her. And I've been absolutely faithful to her in word and deed. And, as far as I can make out, *that's* why she wants a divorce."

"Cut out the bitterness, *please*," I said, "and come down to facts. Good God, man, you could knock me over with a feather! Isn't this some kind of a joke, in very questionable taste, that you're trying to put over?"

"Do I look as if I were joking. I tell you, she has no better reason. If you want the real truth, she's a spoiled child; she has tired of me—she's always said she would some time or other——"

"That's no excuse."

"It's good enough for her. She says she gave me *fair* warning when she married me, and she seems to think that that excuses anything she may do now. Suppose I said to you, 'Some day, old man, I'm going to steal your black pearl'—would that excuse me when the day came and I stole it?"

"But just being bored with existing circumstances isn't a good enough reason for breaking up a home. What is back of it all? Is there some other man?"

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Renfrew nodded.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "now we're getting down to business. Crazy about him, I suppose?"

"Says she would throw herself under a motor-truck to save him a moment's pain—why a motor-truck, particularly? Pleasant listening for a husband! What?"

"What have you thought out?"

"Nothing but murder. And, no matter how I feel, I know I'm not up to that."

"Who is he?"

Renfrew named the last man in New York whom I would have suspected—a man who passed for honorable, just, and high-minded, a man we had both of us known all our lives and liked.

"Does he feel the same way about her?"

"So *she* says."

"And when did you find all this out?"

"I've been worried over it for several months. But she only told me to-day. And she's in a great hurry for her divorce. You see, when she sees a toy she wants she isn't in the habit of writing to Santa Claus about it and then waiting till Christmas."

"But she can't get a divorce. You haven't been cruel or unfaithful. You haven't deserted her. Just sit tight and she'll come around in time. Take her away somewhere; let her spend a lot of money—capital, if necessary."

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He lifted his right hand and let it fall limply.

"She married me on a condition," he said. "She seems to have foreseen what's happened. She wouldn't marry me until I'd promised her that if ever she wanted to be free I'd let her go."

"What rot!" I said. "She wasn't serious, and you weren't."

"No," he admitted; "but she is now, and a promise is a promise."

"Do you actually feel yourself bound to such a piece of nonsense?"

"Why, yes—hand and foot."

"You'll help her to a divorce?"

He nodded.

"Well," I said; "it will take time. She'll have to go West somewhere for six months. She'll soon tire of that. And you'll have to go through the motions of deserting. By the time the thing comes up in court she'll be sick to death of the new love and will want to be on with the old."

"It won't be that kind of a divorce," he said. "She doesn't want to go West. I'm to put myself in wrong. And then the affair can be rushed through."

"Look here," I said; "you have no right to blemish your reputation."

"Does it matter?"

"It matters like the devil. Yours isn't just a mar-

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riage. What you are for breaking up is a home. There's Tam. Let Ellen go to the devil if she likes. You stick by Tam. Let Ellen run away with what's-his-name and have her fling. But don't you make it a legal fling. Let her get the punishment she deserves. Let her come sneaking back to New York and find that she is no longer made much of in the best circles. Let her have her cake and eat it and be sick!"

"No. I promised."

"How about Tam? Who gets Tam?"

"Oh, I suppose they'll say I'm not a proper guardian. Don't let's talk about Tam. Losing Ellen is about all I can stand. Why—I love her just the way I did when I asked her to marry me."

Sudden tears blinded him, and he was not ashamed.

"She's terribly sorry for me," he went on, "and—oh, if you only knew how much I'd like to be dead!"

"There's one thing you don't realize," I persisted. "You can get along without Ellen—after a time, I mean. But you can't get along without Tam. I've seen you with her too often. And what is much more, Tam can't get along without you. Perhaps you haven't allowed your mind to dwell on Tam's being brought up by a stepfather with ideas of discipline—for other men's daughters. If he hasn't shrunk from breaking up your home he wouldn't shrink from beating your baby black and blue."

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Renfrew said nothing for a while. He got very white, and I could see that his heart was going at a great rate. After a while he spoke in a voice that jumped and jerked.

"Are you trying to work me up to do murder?"

Then there was another silence. Then he said: "If I can get along without Ellen I can get along without Tam. And it won't be for long, anyway."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, I think I'll just die," he said. "People talk lightly and sceptically of broken hearts. Mine's broken—right in two. I'm no good for anything any more—ever. You think you know better. I don't blame you. I know it sounds currish and weak and contemptible. But it's God's truth. She hasn't just given a jolt to my pride and complacency, old man. She's given me my death-blow."

He straightened himself with an effort.

"Now, then, let's get down to business. First, I want a lawyer. If I've got to put myself in wrong, I want to do it good and proper, so that there'll be no question of Ellen not getting what she wants."

"Of course," I said, "you know that if you get caught putting up a job of this kind you can be sent to prison?"

"Yes," he cried; "you don't get punished for doing wrong. You get punished for doing right. It's the

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kind husband, the loving, the faithful, that loses his wife. But the bounder, the drunkard, the brute, the beater, the treacherous, lecherous beast—he knows how to keep his woman in leash, faithful till death, and when the inevitable happens and he is carried off, there she is digging with her nails to get into the same grave with him!”

The more excited he got the calmer I tried to appear. I said:

“As you are still able to make perfectly accurate observations of life, I have hopes for you. You are quite right. The good are punished in this world much oftener than the wicked. I agree absolutely with everything you’ve said.”

There is nothing more soothing to a man than to be agreed with, unless, perhaps, you have the gift of eloquence and can out-Herod him. In a few minutes we were talking ways and means, sketching the outlines of a mean little plot.

III

He soon found it impossible to go on living in his town house. The emptiness of the nursery spread like a malignant tumor until every other room was diseased. He missed Ellen terribly. But he missed Tam in such a way that it almost drove him mad. He kept imagining that she was sick and calling for him.

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We had managed the divorce beautifully.

The other "lady" in the case was plain, middle-aged, and wore spectacles. The witnesses managed to agree upon a story and stick to it; and only these persons, the Renfews, their lawyers, Bill Thomas, and myself were in the secret. Of course Renfew's friends believed that it was a put-up job, but the rest of society was really taken in. These believed that Renfew, secretly, had been a dissolute fellow all his life and that he had only got what he deserved.

The poor soul kept a pretty stiff upper lip for six months, sold his town house, went on several shooting-trips, and was companionable, if not gay. But the day she married the other man he carried on like a lunatic. There's no use writing about it. Any married man, who has done no great wrong, and who is very much in love with his wife and properly jealous of her, will readily imagine what he went through. As night came on we managed to make him drink a good deal, and Bill Thomas got some pills, with instructions, from a young fellow just out of the P. and S., and we dropped a couple of these into his last drink that night, and a few minutes later we had the real pleasure of seeing him fall heavily asleep.

To be on the safe side, we were both with him when he waked. But this was not necessary. The drug had left an aftermath of deadened sensibilities. He talked

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wildly enough but no longer murderously or suicidally. And Bill and I prided ourselves on having averted a catastrophe. But I sometimes wonder if we weren't just officious and interfering—men living in great cities get such conventional and timid notions. It might have been better to have kept out of the way. He wouldn't have hurt Ellen, of course, and he could never have won her back. But he could have saved himself one or two of life's worst pains, and could even have given himself a few moments of purest enjoyment into the bargain. There are times in certain men's unfortunate lives when to fill some other man full of lead, failing an opportunity to put him to death slowly by torture, must afford the most complete and delicious satisfaction imaginable.

However, the thing was settled, and Renfrew did not thereafter show any especial inclination to firearms. He merely wrapped himself in melancholy and brooded. People no longer amused him, but he could not bear to be alone. He became something of a trial even to his best friends. I would rather have listened to the story of his troubles over and over from the beginning than to have been all the time conscious that he was thinking about them, that I was thinking about them, and that we were both doing our best to talk of something else.

He had a legal right to see Tam twice a month, but this was of very little advantage after the first six

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months, as her mother took her abroad on the new honeymoon, and Renfrew had a mistaken delicacy about following them. But he got to thinking about Tam more and more, to missing her more and more, and, finally, to my great relief, he began to form the habit of talking about her.

When Ellen and her new husband returned from Europe, Renfrew wrote her a pathetic letter, asking if she wouldn't let him have Tam to keep. He told her that he thought about very little else in this world, and that it seemed unfair that he, who had once had so much, should now have nothing. He even promised that he would mend his ways toward Tam, bring her up in the way she should go, and not be all the time spoiling her.

Ellen answered that she was very sorry for him, but could not at present see any good reason for going against the decision of the court. "You seem to forget," she wrote, "that I am just as fond of Tam as you are. And I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you know very well you were never able to say 'no' to her, and you probably wouldn't be able to now. She's spoiled enough as it is."

He showed me the letter, and, when I had read it, made comments.

"It seems," he said, "that an innocent man has no rights at all. She says she loves Tam as much as I do.

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What rot! You've seen Tam and me together. Would any woman who loved Tam as much as I do separate us? Two afternoons a month! If I saw her *three* afternoons a month I suppose it would corrode and corrupt her young morals. It's all right for her to see the housebreaker every day—the man who ate my salt and plotted against me while he ate it. He's a perfectly good influence. But I'm Satan. I'm anathema. I can't be trusted with a little child. I might teach her that when she promises to love, honor, and obey a man till death parts them that it means something. Wouldn't that be awful! Think of a young girl brought up to believe and practise that!"

"I always thought you were a fool to furnish Ellen with grounds for a divorce."

"I tell you I promised."

"You were a fool to promise."

"I'm a fool to go on living."

He got out of his chair and began walking up and down the room, twisting his fingers together and swearing. Some of the words I had never heard before and have never heard since. He stopped abruptly and became reminiscent about Tam.

"Before she could talk she had a way of sniffing up her nose—meaning: 'Pick me up and take me for a walk in the garden, and show me the flowers.' I used to carry her up and down the paths until my arms were

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nearly broken. God, what fun it was! If it was toward sunset, she stopped being a human baby and became a sort of little gnome and fairy. She could see things in the shrubberies and under the lilacs that grown people can't see—other gnomes and fairies, likely. She'd give little joyous cries of recognition and surprise, and point: 'What, you here! Well, you could knock me over with a feather!' And they must have answered, because sometimes she'd laugh right out, as if they'd said something that was almost too funny. And then she'd forget about them and think she was teasing me. She used to think that if she hid her head in my neck it tickled me most to death—and so I'd squirm and giggle and she'd get laughing so she could hardly stop. Pretty rough to have meant a lot to a child and to wake up every morning wondering if she's absolutely forgotten you or not."

He tried going away—made rather an elaborate exploring trip to Alaska, found that he couldn't keep his mind off his own misfortunes and Tam, and no matter how tired he got during the day couldn't sleep at night, gave up his expedition just when it was beginning to have results, and came home. I mean he came back to New York; he had no home.

I saw him the day he arrived, and he told me that he had reached the end of his tether. "Four and a half days in a train without sleep," he said—"without sleep.

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Four and a half days. But I'm going to put an end to all this."

"You're going to see a doctor!"

"Yes. But not for insomnia. Listen: I've thought it all out. I've had plenty of time—nights. It's dead easy, and I ought to have done it before. No, I won't drink anything. I'm on the wagon. Don't do for a child to have a drinking father. She's getting old enough to notice. Now listen. This is where you come in. I want to charter a seagoing yacht—a big, solid, comfortable one. You belong to the New York Yacht Club, don't you? Just see what's kicking about loose."

"All right," I said in some wonder, for, although able to afford salt water, he had never been fond of it. He went on rapidly:

"They've got the Burrage house in the Wheatley Hills. I know it inside out. So do you. I'll find out, somehow or other, which is Tam's room. She belongs to me, and I'm going to take her. We'll go at night in a car, whisk her out of the house, and make a record to the Sound. We'll have two cars, in case one breaks down—get her on the yacht, and make for the nearest Canadian port. You'll help?"

I thought the matter out for a while, and finally said that I would help. It is hard for a conservative city man to become lawless in five minutes.

So I found just the ship that Renfrew wanted, and he

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did all the rest—spying on the Burridge house, locating Tam's room, the farmer's longest ladder. And we fixed upon the night of the ninth for the actual kidnapping.

It was all very exciting. I don't quite know why. Even if we got caught at it, the chances were that nothing very terrible would happen. But there's something exciting even in breaking into an empty barn by daylight, and when we were gathered under Tam's window with the ladder, I know that my own particular nerves were kicking up the deuce of a row.

The window was open and palely lighted. But this was undoubtedly from one of those stumpy night-lights without which modern children seem unable to sleep. It really made matters easier. The chief difficulty would probably be with the child's nurse. She slept in the next room, but, of course, if Tam, surprised in her sleep, kicked up a row, she would wake and scream, and we'd have to act mighty quick to make our getaway.

Renfrew, however, was all ready for the nurse. He had a roll of yellowbacks three inches in diameter and a big blue automatic. If she waked he intended to kidnap her, too, either by bribery or intimidation.

We leaned the long ladder against the window-sill, and Renfrew, in soft tennis shoes, went swiftly up it.

For what happened when Renfrew reached the top of

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the ladder I was not in the least prepared. I thought that the child's nurse might wake, see a man's head and shoulders framed in the open window, and scream. I think I rather expected something of that kind to happen, and Bill Thomas has told me that he did, too. Somehow it had never occurred to us that some more resourceful person than the nurse might be waked, and that poor Renfrew might be mistaken for a common housebreaker.

Just as Renfrew's head drew above the window-sill, some one let off a shotgun, pointblank in his face. He was blown backward clean off the ladder. He seemed to be a long time in the air, spread out like some strange species of flying thing. He seemed to come down very slowly. I do not remember that there was any sound when his back and shoulders dug into the turf.

We heard a voice from above, a voice shaken with anger and nerves and filled at the same time with a sort of awe.

"Got him, by Gawd!"

Then Bill Thomas stepped forward, lurching like a drunken man, his hands clinched.

"Yes," he said, "you got him! You've killed Renfrew. . . . And all he wanted was his baby. . . ."

Mrs. Renfrew's second husband leaned out of the window.

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"Who's that talking?"

You could see even in that light that he was shuddering in a horrible way.

"He had no business on the ladder," he said. "How could *I* know who it was?"

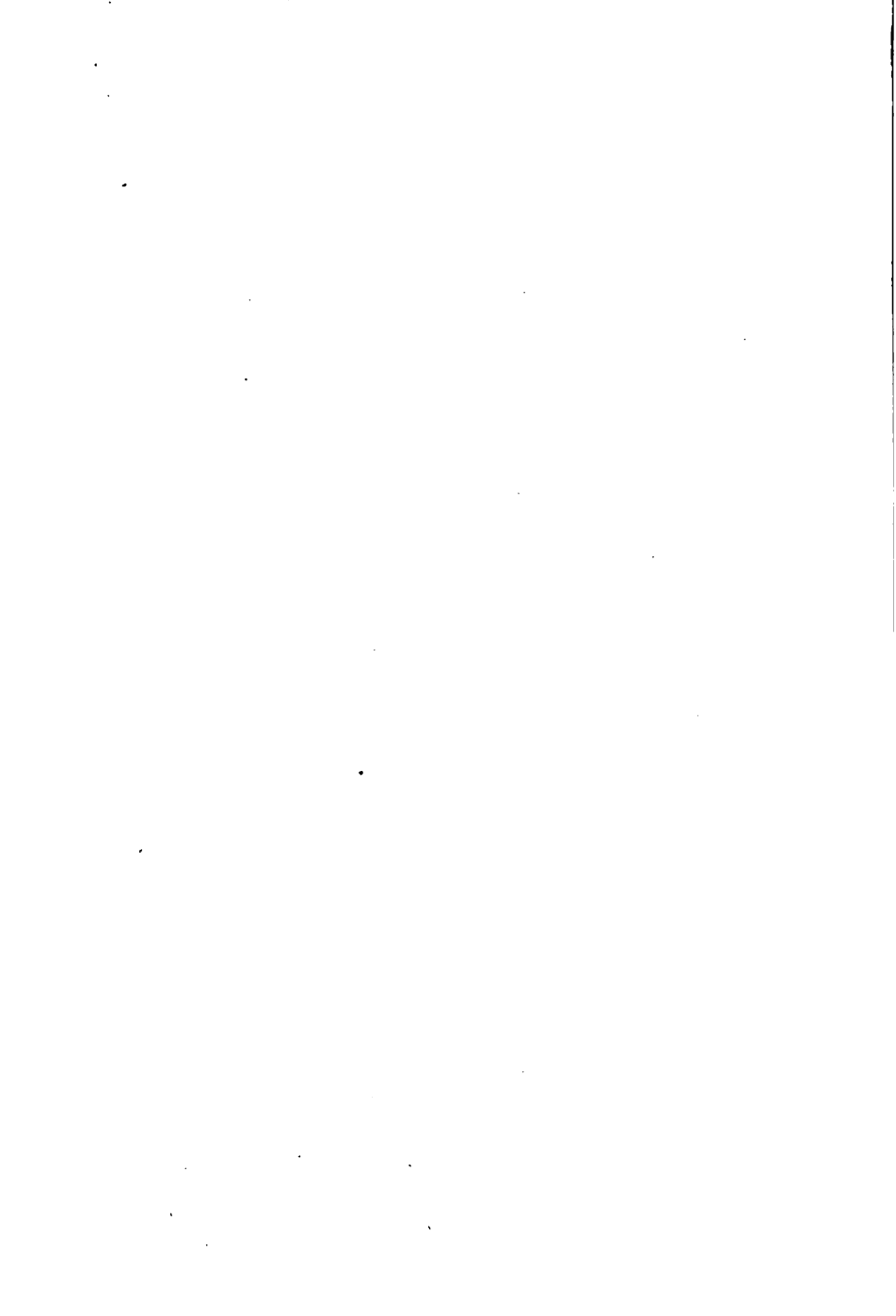
There was a long silence. Then I said:

"He only wanted his baby."

"Well, he had no business— Say, look here—I'm in wrong on this, horribly, but you fellows are witnesses. You saw it happen. I didn't know it was Renfew. . . . I . . . My God, what rotten luck! . . . I . . ."

Then his voice broke into something between cringing, between screaming, between whining:

"And, besides—it's the law—they *can't* touch me for this! . . . It's the unwritten law that every man's home is his castle! . . ."



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A worthy old gentleman who has worked twelve hours a day for sixty-four years, and accumulated a million and a half dollars, said the other afternoon to a friend of mine:

"Do you mean to tell me that if you could be assured of five thousand dollars a month for the rest of your life you would go down-town and close your office?" It was more an indignant exclamation than a question. My friend answered:

"No, *sir*. I would *not*. I wouldn't take the trouble to go down-town and close my office. I'd just leave it there."

This is a story of ambition. But it is not addressed to the poor. It is addressed to the idle well-to-do. A man with plenty of money is ambitious of more, and will give his life, his health, and his possibilities to the getting of it. And that must be the worthiest ambition in the world, because it is stamped with the approval of the greatest number of people in the world. To work in grooves that you don't like, to get stuff that you don't know how to use when you get it, is noble.

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Almost everybody says so. Therefore this is an ignoble story of an ignoble ambition.

The truly worthy, the deeply religious, and the very young are warned against it. And I only tell it because it is also a study in heredity. And anything to do with heredity is serious and useful; since if it wasn't for heredity no man born of woman would ever have a really sound excuse to offer for some of the things that he can't help doing. If he comes reeling home at four A. M., what of it? Noah was also a drunkard.

Stuart Greenway knew very little about finance. He understood, however, that every small boy of his acquaintance had selected better-to-do parents than he had. This boy had a pony; that boy had a boat; the Brown brothers possessed double-barrel shotguns; the Smiths had toy yachts made by the famous Gramm, in the exact likeness of cup-defenders. When his friends came to see him they came in pony-carts, on ponies, on bicycles, in carriages driven by coachmen. When he went to see them he ran.

He didn't run because it was good for him; but because his nearest friends lived a mile and a half up the bay, and he was always in a hurry to get to them. At first, when he was very little, it wasn't real running, and it didn't last all the way. He trotted along like a nice little puppy, got out of breath, walked, trotted again, and so on. But in the end he developed a won-

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derfully strong pair of legs, and an everlasting long wind.

In those days all the boys' parents were young, and they were all learning the brand-new game of lawn-tennis. It wasn't long before the boys themselves began to play, and to make proper strokes with the old-fashioned, lopsided rackets. At first Stuart Greenway had to look on, because his shoes had heels and his parents couldn't afford him a racket. But one day a rich and fat parent hurled a brand-new racket upon the greensward, and said that anybody could have it that wanted it; and, perceiving the look of desperate hopefulness in Stuart's eyes, he said, "Yes; *you!*"

As for tennis-shoes, it was the Lord God who gave Stuart a pair; for off came his heavy school boots, and off came his heavy ribbed stockings (how they did itch a boy round the knees!) and his small, arched feet were light upon the turf.

It was not long before Stuart realized that he had something which money cannot buy, and which all his rich friends envied him. He was a natural-born tennis-player, and they weren't. He even put his mind upon the game. He chalked a line, the height of a net, in a barn; he chalked squares upon the floor. And he practised and practised until he could hit a ball as many times as he pleased just above the net-line, and make it drop time after time into any given square.

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They were slow strokes, having no sting, but fore-hand, back-hand, or volleyed, they became steady and sure. At night, under the lamp, when he had done his lessons, he made outlines (to scale) of tennis-courts, and gave himself problems for solution. "Suppose the other fellow puts the ball here from such and such a place, what do I do?"—etc., etc. And whenever he had a chance to play, he tried to put his theories into practice, and he made amazing progress.

Don't think that tennis was his only love. He liked all the other games that boys play, and most of the mischiefs they do. When he got hold of a dime, he spent it like a great lord. When he got hold of an arrowhead or a rare moth, he hid it away as misers hoard gold. Once he shot a crow with a bow and arrow; once he climbed a great grim ogre of a tree, and stole an egg out of an eagle's nest.

And he won long-distance races; and saved a little girl from drowning; and took a prize for reading and declamation; and was kept in for being unable to spell, and was punished for throwing spitballs; and had a toy cannon burst in his face one Fourth of July; and went to dancing-school, and learned the waltz and the polka and the "heel, toe, and away we go," and proper manners. And went to church Sundays and was bored stiff, and fell in love with the little girl he had saved from drowning; and on rainy holidays listened to

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stories of amorous adventures as retailed by grooms and butlers.

And sometimes he hoped that when he grew up he would be very good, and sometimes he hoped that he would be very wicked. And he asked many questions, and was very much like other boys. But I must say that he never aspired to be a policeman.

Presently they sent him to boarding-school, where he continued to learn good, evil, Latin, mathematics, discipline, and tennis. They had bumpy clay courts at that school. And the ball bounded far higher than from turf, and for a few days young Greenway was all at sea. But he mastered the bumps and the bounces, and waded through the autumn tournament to the finals, disposing of all sorts and sizes of boys. In the finals a great boy eighteen years old opposed him, won two sets, began to tire in the third, and then proceeded to beat himself. But the following spring Stuart had so improved that he defeated the same great fellow in straight sets.

II

Three miles up the boulevard from the house of Stuart Greenway's parents was the first or second Country Club founded in America. There were great trees and green lawns running down to blue bays and estuaries. There were a polo-field, and a turf race-

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track, and tennis-courts, and toboggan-slides for winter, and quail to whistle in spring, and long glasses to drink out of in summer and other seasons.

Every summer the club invited the best players in the country to play lawn-tennis on its pretty courts for an immense silver bowl, and because he played so nicely Stuart Greenway was allowed to play in this tournament the first summer he came home from boarding-school.

The National Champion didn't play that year. But the Harmon brothers did; and the elder ranked about second in the country and the younger about sixth. We have developed more potent players than the Harmon's, but never another to play so gracefully and so coolly. They came through the longest matches unruffled. They never had to run races after the ball. They always knew where it was coming, and were there to meet it. Upon their heads, the hair neatly parted, no hair ever came out of place. They wore the whitest trousers, the pinkest shirts, the stiffest turn-down collars, the blackest strap ties. They played the very best they knew how, always, but never seemed to care whether they won or lost. And oh, the clean, pretty, sweeping strokes—time after time, the full diagonal length of the court (old tactics); and the crisp, unsuspected "places" that took advantage of an opponent's mistakes and scored the points!

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Theirs was the most admirable play that Stuart Greenway had ever seen. It was his own style of play, but raised to the *n*th power. Could he ever so raise his own? Sitting, watching, thinking, he had the gravest doubts.

Well, he found himself in the semi-finals pitted against the younger Harmon. And he marched out upon the court with much the feeling of a French gentleman going to be guillotined. He was shy. He was fifteen. He was self-conscious. There was one of those red things developing conspicuously on his nose. It felt as big to him as Mount Popocatepetl. His best white trousers had grass stains on both knees. His shoes had black sweat-marks. His racket had one string broken and was soft and mushy. And almost everybody he knew in the world was looking at him, and at least a hundred people he didn't know from Adam.

Self-consciousness and self-pity were his strongest emotions. He even wished that he was dead. "*Then they'd be sorry.*" And he played for three games as if he were engaging in the sport for the first time. A lobbed ball disappeared in the blazing sun—he missed it entirely. And people tittered, and then Stuart Greenway saw red. And calmness came to him—concentration, clear vision—and he gave battle.

Some of the gets he made that day should be dia-

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gramed in gold on the Hall of Fame. The gallery rose to them, with handclapping and cheering. He who had always "gentled the ball" began now to "paste" it, and lo! so many of the "pastes" "came off" that points came to him, and games even. And there were times when he had the wonderful Harmon running from corner to corner of the court, and even more glorious times when by a well-masked shot he caused the wonderful Harmon to anticipate wrong, and to look almost foolish.

It was much, but it was not enough. And suddenly it was over. He had been beaten in straight sets, but he had fought for them. He saw Harmon spring lightly over the net, and advance toward him with outstretched hand. He saw the famous Harmon smile beam upon him, and he heard the gentle, well-bred voice, saying: "You played very badly."

That was what the Harmons always said to beaten adversaries. And when you think of it, it's about the only decent and modest thing there is to say.

They left the court together. And the elder Harmon, the really great one, joined them.

"Don't you ever get tired, Greenway?" he asked.

"I don't think so," said Greenway. "Not very. Sometimes when it's very hot and the court's a long way off——"

"How do you mean—a long way off?"

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Stuart blushed; he had not meant to say what he had said. It had slipped out.

"Like to-day," he faltered. "Bobby Brown promised to drive me over, and he didn't come, and if I didn't want to be late I had to run."

"To run? How far?"

"Well, my father steps just a yard, and he says it's only three miles, but——"

"You ran three miles, and then played like that?"

Stuart was so embarrassed that he wanted to cry. "I didn't want to be late," he apologized.

But the famous brothers put back their heads and laughed. And the younger said, "We three must have a powwow!"

And they ordered an immense glass of lemonade for Stuart, and for themselves, alas! immense glasses of a deep brownish mixture, and they powwowed in a cool corner, and won all his worship and confidence with their gentle, winning ways.

"What sort of a bat do you use?"

He showed them.

"Why, it's a regular fish-net. It's got a broken string."

"I've got a regular collection of bats," said the younger Harmon. "Would you mind if I picked out a couple that feel pretty good, and sent 'em to you?"

Good Lord, how happy they made that boy, and what

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good, honest young gentlemen they were, loving the game that they played so prettily far more than the victories that so often fell to them!

At parting, the elder and gentler clapped young Greenway upon the back, and said: "Next year we'll both be afraid of you!"

And when he had gone they talked about him, laughing a little, admiring a good deal. And they took rackets and showed each other how young Greenway made certain strokes. And nodded their heads or shook them. And the younger said: "Tell you one thing, and it's what'll win for him some day: that boy doesn't play you—he fights you."

"Yes," agreed the elder, "but first he runs three miles, so's not to keep his elders waiting——"

"Three miles with the sun in the hundreds——"

Through the open window, far off, they saw Stuart Greenway trotting across a bowl of lawn on a short cut for the boulevard. This time he was not really in a hurry. The Harmon brothers had made him feel so happy, and such friends with himself, that he simply had to do something about it. That was all. And what, I ask you, can express happiness more simply than running a few miles to tell your mother how happy you are?

But he was not to run all the way. A bay horse that went very free between the shafts of a runabout

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overtook him, and a gay voice called upon him by name, and lo, it was the voice of the little girl he had saved from drowning! It was the voice of the girl who in all his life was never to be gainsaid by him.

And he sat beside her, and she urged the horse to gallop, which was a way she had, and she said:

"Everybody says that next year or the year after you'll beat the life out of the Harmons." And her face, cut out of a rose (the eyes were half-moons of sapphire), was all pride in him, and loyalty. And when she put him down at his door, the eyes of each lingered in the eyes of the other. For in these two children love already burned with a clear and steady flame.

But this is a story of ambition. Not love itself shall wholly divert the writer from his stern purpose.

III

Next day Stuart Greenway and the little girl he had saved from drowning lay on the grass, chins on hands, just back of the back net, and watched the Harmon brothers play the five-set match which ended the tournament. It is better to see tennis from the end than from the side; the strategy, when there is any, not only becomes more plain, but it is not necessary to be always wiggling one's head to follow the flight of the ball.

Lying in the grass alongside the girl was a great pleas-

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ure, but watching that match was not. It was hopelessly discouraging. For the play of both brothers seemed perfection.

Of course we wouldn't think so to-day. Tactics have changed; strokes have become more severe; courts faster, contestants more bellicose.

But for the days of their prominence the Harmons were wonderfully good; hitting from back court, from corner to corner, long, crisp strokes; serving swiftly but not furiously; going to the net to volley only when "pulled in"; the points earned by placements without much pace. It must have been a dreadfully hard game to beat by anybody who—played the same kind of a game.

So much was obvious to Stuart, and so much he confided to the girl.

"I tell you," he said, "it's no use learning to play their game; to beat it you've got to learn a different game." And his mind, precocious where tennis was concerned, began to work and fret and evolve and discard. Would it be well to hit the ball harder? Yes; but not at any great sacrifice of steadiness. Would it be well when you did go to the net to go a little nearer than the Harmons did? Hum—hum—and then things began to flash in Stuart's concentrated mind.

"What you grinning at?"

"'Cause I think I've found how to beat 'em."

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Her great eyes, full of faith, glistened with excitement.

"Cross your heart you'll never tell?"

"'Course I won't tell."

Then, eyes shining, whispering eagerly, the boy unbosomed himself of inventions and discoveries. In his sanguine mind he saw himself not only beating the perfect play of the Harmons, but beating it all to pieces.

"Do you see what I mean?"

She nodded wisely.

"Is it any good?"

"It's so good that next year I'll bet my bottom dollar on you to win—if I can get it up."

She did get it up, and some other dollars; for she belonged to a sporting family who saw nothing wicked in betting and playing cards for money, and she stood to win quite a large sum. She had had discouraged letters from Stuart during the fall.

"They're making me play football 'for the good of the school' instead of tennis for the good of myself," he wrote. "But the thing is going to work if I can get enough practice. Only wait till spring. They can't make me play baseball, because I throw like a girl."

Spring came, early summer. He had saved up enough money to send her a telegram. It read: "Bet your bottom dollar."

He had no sooner sent his telegram than he received

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a parcel by express. It was from the younger Harmon, and contained two brand-new rackets of exquisite feel and balance. They suited Stuart to a T. So did the note which accompanied them: . . . "When you beat us at the Country Club this year we want to feel that we at least supplied the bats. How are you coming on? We think we are hitting the ball very well for us. . . ."

That year the Harmons met each other in the very first round of the tournament, and as usual the younger went down to defeat in five beautiful sets. The elder then beat two "dubs," and, in the semi-finals, no less a giant of tennis than the National Champion.

"The tournament," said the wise, "is now over. Too bad. They should have salted the draw. All Harmon's got to do now is to beat young Greenway in the finals. Bet you ten to one on Harmon."

"Take that ten times," said a little girl with big eyes. The wise one laughed and said "Done!" And then everybody had tea and drinks and conversation, and went home.

Greenway, meanwhile, had won his match in the semi-final. He had had a very easy draw, and had not found it necessary to show any of the new tennis that he had up his sleeve. Heaven helping, he would spring all that on the elder Harmon to-morrow!

To-morrow came bright, clear, and hot. It differed from other summer days in having the longest morning

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that Greenway ever remembered. He was nervous as a cat. He couldn't sit still. He felt weak and unhappy. The only comfort was that he had a nice, clean pair of white trousers to appear in, and a decent-looking pair of shoes. Suppose what he thought to be new tennis had been tried out by others and found wanting? Harmon would make him look like a fool.

At two o'clock Somebody called for him in a runabout and drove him up to the Country Club. At a quarter of three he was talking with the Harmon brothers. At five minutes of three he was shaking hands with the champion, who was to referee. At three o'clock, having won the toss, and elected to serve, he faced the elder Harmon across the net, seeing him as if in a mist.

They warmed up for a while, Harmon hitting the ball with the middle of his racket, Greenway with every part of his except the middle. His knees and elbows felt as if they were water. And there seemed to be something wrong with his eyes. He couldn't see the ball distinctly, or Harmon's face. Gradually, however, the fog cleared, and he began to "find" the ball, to put pace upon it, to reach the corners and the baseline.

"Ready, if you are," said Harmon.

And they both took their places—Greenway to serve, Harmon to receive.

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The gallery had already given the match to Harmon, and was only politely interested. But one small girl with sapphire eyes shaped like half-moons was pale as a sheet. She had come not to see tennis—but victory. Also, she had bet her bottom dollar but that didn't trouble her.

Greenway served a crisp, high-bounding ball to Harmon's back-hand, and then he did a thing that, until that day, had never been seen in first-class tennis. Instead of stepping outside the base-line, and waiting warily and defensively for Harmon's return, he ran for the net. The move perplexed Harmon. He took his eye off the ball to look at Greenway, and "flubbed."

"Fifteen love," announced the champion from the referee's chair.

Again Greenway served and ran to the net. This time Harmon attempted to lob the ball over his head, but Greenway anticipated just this, stepped back, and smashed the ball far out of Harmon's reach.

"Thirty love."

Harmon tried a ground stroke. Greenway blocked it sharply across court.

"Forty love."

Harmon tried to put the ball between Greenway and the side-line. But the passing shot, if known to the elder generation of tennis, was not practised by them. They hit from corner to corner, not up and down the

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side-lines. Greenway "covered" that attempt to pass and smothered it.

"The games," said the champion, "are one love. Mr. Greenway leads." He had been very sleepy when the match began. He was now wide-awake, and rather excited. So was the younger Harmon. As for the small girl, *she* wasn't excited—not a bit of it. If she had been excited do you think she would have sat there sucking her thumb the way unscientifically raised babies do when they prepare to go bodyby?

On his returns of Harmon's service Greenway continued to run in close to the net and force the play. And the first thing he knew he had won the first set six games to the great Harmon's three. And it was the same with the second set.

While the players were changing sides the younger Harmon confabbed with the referee.

"It's simple as A-B-C," he said, "and absolutely obvious. Wonder nobody ever thought of it before."

"The way to beat it," said the champion, "is to learn to play the ball down the side-line. That also is obvious."

"And who's going to be able to do that between now and Monday? If that boy goes to Newport he will be champion."

"Hum!" said the champion—but in his heart he thought so too, and was afraid.

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Harmon changed his tactics. He accepted the new tennis for what it was worth, and tried to play it. Serving, he too ran into the net, and, seeing this, young Greenway smiled in the secret depths of his strong heart.

A kind of a great "Ah-ah!" went up from the gallery. Greenway was being attacked with his own weapons. How would he defend himself? Very easily, for the most part. It was not in vain that he had spent a whole spring playing the ball up and down the court instead of from corner to corner. The ball, bounding high, came to him on the fore-hand—he stroked it gently, but crisply, straight down the line. It dropped in by a matter of inches. Harmon hadn't been able to reach to within five feet of it. A drop of blood ran down a small girl's lower lip.

Again the great Harmon was passed, and again.

"It's all over," said the younger Harmon, and twenty minutes later it was. But this year it was Greenway who leaped the net, and Greenway who said, a little sorrow in his eye, a little mischief:

"You played very badly."

They left the court together, Harmon's right arm about Greenway's shoulder. At a respectful distance followed the younger Harmon and the champion.

"Now," said the great Harmon, "my brother and I are going to Newport to-morrow, Sunday, on the one

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o'clock. You can still enter by telegram. Will you come? A championship wouldn't be a championship without you in it. You'll walk right through everybody."

"I'm crazy to play," said Stuart, "but I—we're awful poor. I don't like to ask my mother. She'd find the money somehow—and go without things, and that isn't good enough."

"You come as my guest," said Harmon, "please."

If only I could reproduce Harmon's mild, gentle, winning voice! But I can't.

"Really? Do you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it."

A wonderful happiness surged in Stuart's heart. To play in the championship, to have a good chance to win! "You're awful good."

"You'll come?"

"Yes, and thank you millions of times."

But he was not to play in that championship, nor the next, nor any championship. There came that night the news that his grandfather was suddenly dead. After a while it dawned that certain plump moneys confidently hoped for from the grandfather's estate were never to materialize.

All things that he had counted on were taken from Stuart—tennis—college. He was only sixteen. That fall they made him go to work, and he became the hum-

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blest clerk in a banking-house, and did the very best he knew how, and wore the smiling, cheerful face. But often his heart ached for the things that he had so longed to do and be.

Whenever he could, he played tennis. But two weeks a year is very little vacation, and when you are a business man Saturdays and Sundays are nearly always rainy. His great game went all to pot. At sixteen, though not actually champion, he was the best player in the country. At nineteen, pale, a little near-sighted, and often very unhappy, he was a "has-been."

And meanwhile other players were reaping fame along the lines which he had invented.

IV

Now Stuart Greenway was the most temperate young fellow in the world, and one of the shyest. One day (he was now twenty-two) he learned that a great-aunt of his had left him a legacy of five thousand dollars. And that made him very happy. The same day he read in a paper that *She* was reported engaged to be married to . . . etc., etc., and that made him very unhappy, and so he got drunk.

He didn't get beastly drunk, nor weeping drunk—but gayly, wildly, wisely, and a little impertinently drunk. He made friends with total strangers. It was

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delightful. You drank with them, they told you the stories of their lives, and you left them and went elsewhere. You bought standing room in theatres, and laughed at the sad parts, and cried about the jokes. Whenever a beautiful young woman wanted to be a mother to you, you ran. You saw a drunken man lurching into a darkened street; cold and horrified, you pointed him out to a policeman.

Then you were in a "sort of place" with old prints on the wall, talking business with an inventor. He had invented a sort of bottle that kept hot things hot and cold things cold. His talk was a combination of Demosthenes, Mirabeau, Daniel Webster, and Peter Dunne. Shedding a few trustful tears, you bought a half-right in his wonderful invention for five thousand dollars. You gave him your note for that amount, and next day when he called upon you in the banking parlors where you worked, you actually recognized your own writing.

"I suppose," said Stuart in an undertone, "you know I was drunk when I gave you that note."

"I know you were," said the inventor—no longer Demosthenes-Mirabeau-Webster-Dunne, but a seedy, anxious-looking individual.

"Won't you let me off? It's all the money I've got in the world or ever will have."

"It's the same with me," said the inventor. "So

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I can't let you off. For the good of both of us, I won't."

I have hinted that this is an immoral story. There are plenty of people who say that Stuart Greenway is a financial genius. As a matter of fact, he knows very little about business. He got drunk and, instead of being punished, was rewarded. For Heaven's sake don't try to draw a moral.

In less than a year he had retired from clerking. The patent bottle was bringing him in all kinds of money—yellow, white, red, and green. People said he was the cleverest man of his age (which of course was never *exactly* their own) that they had ever seen.

Money meant two things to Stuart. First, the girl, if he could get her. Second, tennis.

She had been reported engaged. But she didn't act to Stuart like an engaged girl. True, the other fellow was always hanging about, and he was rather a fine, generous sort of fellow. But the eyes of true love, noting this thing and that, felt that the world had not, perhaps, *really* come to an end. A question would settle the matter definitely—but that question he was afraid to ask. He never did ask it. For one day he got to feeling so loving and tender and melancholy and lonely that he suddenly took her in his arms, and she was so happy and relieved that she flung hers about him—and then they made such a fuss over each other that you

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might have thought the room contained a dozen loving couples instead of only one.

They were both rich, and they had always loved each other, so they had the shortest kind of an engagement. And they went on a long honeymoon, which took in the national championship at Newport. And it came to pass that a stork hovered over their home and a son was born.

During the first year of his marriage, Stuart played a great deal of tennis. He wanted to "get back," and she wanted him to. But he had been out of the game for too many years. He had clerked too many long hours; injured his outdoor-loving eyes; lost something, the elasticity of youth, the whatever it is that you do lose trying to make a living.

He had stood still. The game had gone on and on. The famous Harmons were no longer *anybody* when it came to actual play. One had married—one had developed gout. The old champion was a has-been. The new champion made a business of the game, ate and drank for it, lived for it—had a trainer. The leading players of the country had names that had not been heard of in the days when Stuart was at his best.

One day young Mrs. Greenway, slipping noiselessly into the nursery, found Stuart addressing his toothless son, to whom he had just presented a tennis-ball.

"Maybe you don't understand," he was saying, "how

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much father wanted to be champion. But now he's got you and mums, he doesn't care. Just as soon as you're big enough to swing a bat—hallo, Honeybug! I was thinking what fun it would be if we could train the kid up to be champion! Ever tell you how ridiculously hard it was for me to give the game up? I knew it was silly and unmanly to feel that way about a game. But somehow if a fellow can only do one thing well—if it's only chuck-cherry on a tombstone—he has a love and friendship for that thing that passes all understanding. If things had broken differently—if grandpa had had the tact to live a week longer, and not go broke, I'd have come very near being champion. However, let's forget it, will we? But sometimes I just can't."

The bringing-up of the Greenway kid was not respectable. He was brought up just the opposite from that eleven-year-old who lectured at Harvard the other day on the Fourth Dimension, and to my mind *he* wasn't respectably brought up, either. But as the Harvard kid took to mathematics (and spectacles) so the Greenway kid took to level stretches of turf, geometrically marked with white chalk, and to keeping steadfastly a pair of young eagle eyes upon a flying and bounding ball.

To be the best lawn-tennis player in the world? What an empty ambition! Why, half the brains, half

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the application, half the self-denial, plus the conscience to call balls that are in, out, could make you one of the world's leading financiers, admired and kowtowed to by everybody. If it were suddenly decreed that the money plums of their lives should go to athletes who live clean and play fair, instead of to blotchy, stomachy individuals who live loose and cheat, and fatten on privileges, what a wonderful upside-downing of the world there would be! How the cities would empty and the green fields fill! How disease would run shrieking away! How nobility and chivalry would come galloping up! How the Greenways and their kid would think it all the most natural and understandable thing imaginable.

But, as things are, we look up to professional manipulators and down on professional athletes. And this is what we mean when we talk of original sin.

The Greenway kid began to play tennis when he wasn't much taller than a tennis-bat. And almost from the first it was obvious that he had inherited his father's talent. It came natural to him to look at the ball instead of at the landscape, and whatever they had to do to his fore-hand later on, he was born with a beautiful back-hand.

Incidentally, he learned to read and write and figure, and to have good manners. And he even went to boarding-school and played football and baseball and read

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Cæsar and Xenophon with a "trot." But the best of him was dedicated to tennis; nor was he allowed to learn the game "all wrong," as most boys, left to themselves, learn it. It was taught to him properly from the beginning, by a great English professional, who, finding that he had wonderful material to work on, put his heart and soul and his final judgments of how the game should be played, into the teaching. The Greenway kid grew tall, strong, and long-limbed. He was very fast on his feet, and had the endurance of a hunting-dog. Once in Canada—but this is a story of ambition.

The game that he was taught to play, although not as revolutionary as that which his father had invented, was a new game. And in it was much of his teacher, something of himself, and something of his father. For Stuart Greenway saw all the first-class tennis of his time, and thought about it and was very wise.

The scheme of the kid's game was this: to put his adversary so far out of court that he could not make a dangerous return, and then to annex the point with a slam or a sharp place, or a little chop just over the net. Therefore he was taught from the beginning of things the American service. Now, this stroke, as all men know, causes the ball to rise from the ground with redoubled speed, shaped like a cucumber, and with a hideously sudden change of direction. It is a stroke which startles and horrifies nature and gravity. And

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when it is cunningly placed, it forces the receiver of it so far out of court that he would have no trouble in proving an alibi.

To deliver that serve is one thing. Many players do it very well indeed, and they follow it into the net and enjoy themselves. To receive it and to return it so that the return is not a despairing act of defence but an aggressive attack, is quite another. And here it was that the Greenway kid's game differed from that played by his contemporaries; for he learned to stand well inside the base-line of the court, instead of many feet back of it, and to hit those unnaturally bounding balls before they had bounced far enough to do any evil; and not merely to hit them, but so to meet them, lean upon them, and change the plane of his racket at the last instant, that he sent them back even faster than they had come, and to places which the wisest adversary could never anticipate.

Now, the Greenway kid could not always bring these wonderful shots off. The margin of error was so very small that if he was the least bit nervous, or if his eyes were a little tired, he made such foolish-looking flubs, dubs, and misses that people who didn't understand what he was trying to do were inclined to laugh.

"Every shot an ace," was his motto. And that is the hardest motto in the world to live up to. But every year he became steadier and stronger physically and

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nervously. And the Englishman and Frenchman against whom he played just beat him when he wasn't playing his best, and were unmercifully beaten by him when he was.

On these occasions he always shook hands with them, smiling shyly, and said: "You played very badly."

At last, the Greenway kid having learned all the tennis that could be taught him, and being eighteen, and ripe for college, it was decided that he should play the American circuit, and get in line for the championship.

"He may not win this year," said his father to his mother, "and he may. He's got the strokes, and the strength, but he's very young and very diffident. He doesn't know yet how very good he is. I don't expect him to win this year. *Really*, I don't! But next year—or the year after. He's bound to improve up to twenty-five—why, in a year or two there'll be nothing to it. It's been a long wait, but that championship is coming my way."

"*Your way?*" she laughed.

"Our way. You see, I never can forget that I had a good chance to win it myself when I was a kid."

"It would be safer if we had another boy in reserve instead of three girls."

"There couldn't be two boys like our boy. You can teach 'em and teach 'em, but it isn't everybody that's

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got champion calibre. . . . I'll only bet a little this year. But next year—up goes my bottom dollar."

Her eyes shone with excitement, remembering old days. "And mine," she said.

That summer the Greenway kid was the sensation of the American courts. He didn't win the championship, because he wasn't yet steady enough. But the two sets that he did take from the champion at Newport were taken as easily as a big child takes candy from a little. Indeed, when the Greenway kid's strokes came off, the champion might as well have been tied hand and foot. He was made to look almost as if he had stepped into a court for the first time. And even in the sets which he lost, the Greenway kid did most of the playing. He either made an ace, according to his motto, or he gave the point away.

It wasn't a win, but it gave the gallery electric shocks, four or five in succession sometimes, and it gave the champion one attack after another of heart-disease, and it gave the old tennis-players, old champions, fathers, grandfathers, and patrons of the game, food for a whole winter of talk and speculation. And the conclusion which one and all of them came to was this:

"Age that boy a little, and there's nothing to it—nothing."

Alas, there was more to it than that.

The Greenway kid entered Yale, and one day in the

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winter as he was crossing the campus, a book and a notebook under his arm, a classmate hit him in the back of the neck with a snowball.

The Greenway kid dropped his books, hastily packed a snowball and, laughing aloud, furiously threw it. That it reached its mark was his only satisfaction. His throwing arm hurt him abominably between the elbow and the shoulder.

In this life there are two most important maxims: Don't drink on an empty stomach, and don't throw with a cold arm. Ask the late Mr. Brown, or young Smith who used to pitch, southpaw, for the Athletics.

When the tennis season opened, there was dismay in the Greenway family. The kid's arm would work all right for a game or two, and then just in the middle of a stroke it would suddenly refuse to do what was asked of it.

"It doesn't hurt," said the kid, "and *that* wouldn't matter. It just won't work."

He tried many doctors and many cures—but the miserable "catch" in the upper arm persisted. It would do him no justice on the courts, and when he came off them it ached for hours like an ulcerated tooth.

At last a ball-player told him of a doctor, an osteopath in Ohio, whose specialty was baseball arms. "Makes old pitchers new," said the player. "But if they're beyond help, he tells 'em."

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To Ohio forthwith, to the office in Canton of "Bone-setter Price," journeyed the Greenway kid. Two hours after reaching the doctor's office he telegraphed to his anxious father:

"Nothing doing. Arm gone up the spout for good. Don't you care."

But his father did care. He said to the mother (with a fine show of bravery):

"Oh, I suppose it was an unworthy ambition!"

And then he went and sat in his library for an hour and looked out of the window, and when one of his daughters called to him that tea was ready, he said he was reading and didn't wish to be disturbed. If he felt sorry for himself and the mother, he felt sorrier for the boy.

But the boy was very cheerful about it, said it didn't matter, no use crying over spilt milk, better luck next time, never did like tennis anyway, wouldn't be champion if you paid him, etc., etc. Indeed, he was so unnaturally cheerful that when he packed up some grips and traipsed off to Bar Harbor his mother said to his father, "I believe he's in love." And, having said it, she got to believing it, and was more worried than by the loss of thousands and thousands of championships.

Two weeks later the Greenway kid came home, and when he told his parents and his sisters that he was

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engaged to be married, and that nothing in this world really counts except love, there was a terrific excitement. They said that he was too young, very callow, that he couldn't possibly know his own mind. Then he told them who the girl was—and this was their first grain of comfort.

"Why," said his mother, "when you were a little fellow you and she pretended you were engaged."

"And so we were," said he, "and have been ever since."

"It's a little like your father and me," said the mother wistfully. "Oh, dear, how soon young people grow old, and children grow up!"

"Children!" exclaimed the father. And then he clapped his hand over his mouth.

"Of course," said the kid's eldest sister, "you'll finish what you are pleased to call your college career."

The kid nodded. "It's only three years."

His father drew a deep breath, sighed, and said: "Well, I can stand it if you can."

"What did you mean, father, when you said, 'I can stand it if you can'?"

"I meant that the sooner they're married, the sooner there'll be a grandson in the family, and the more time I'll have to teach that grandson all the tennis I know."

"Maybe the child's parents won't approve. I don't

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think our boy ever really cared much about the championship."

"Don't you? Shows how much you know. He's a thoroughbred. He hides his feelings."

Four years later the elder Greenway was bending over a shapely boy baby, to whom he had just made a present of a tennis-ball. Hearing a sound, the elder Greenway straightened up, guiltily, and turned around.

It was only his son entering the nursery to have a parental look at the baby. But for some reason the kid was blushing as if he had been caught in a shameful act.

"What you blushing about?"

"Nothing."

"What you got your hand behind your back for?"

The Greenway kid very sheepishly withdrew his hand. It contained a tennis-ball.

Then the two men looked each other a long time in the eye. A lump rose in the elder's throat. They bent over the cradle.

"Got a bully chest on him," said his father gruffly.

"Got a bully set of arms and legs," said the son.

"Got a bully round head on him; going to be clever."

"Got a fighting jaw."

There was a long, admiring silence. Then the grandfather, very, very gruffly:

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"May not be a worthy ambition, but I propose that when the boy gets to be about seven——"

"What are you two talking about?"

The mother and the grandmother had come in, linked together like two schoolgirls.

"The kid," said the grandfather grimly, "was just saying that in his opinion the Progressive Party is bound to win in the long run."

"You see," said the kid with dignity, "it's made up of our own kind of people—people who realize that there are better things in this world than money and power—people who——"

But the ladies had seen the tennis-balls. And they put their hands to their mouths. Then the grandmother took the baby out of the cradle (without breaking any of its bones) and dandled it, and she said with fine sarcasm:

"Is this, by any chance, your Progressive Party that's bound to win in the long run? . . . Did ums was a champion, I wants to know!"

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"Don't tell me you're going out again to-night!"

Mrs. Princevale raised her eyebrows as high as she could.

"Of course I am. I told you so last week."

"Whose dance is it this time?"

"The Bougainvilliers'."

He regarded his wife for some moments; not exactly critically, but as if he thought the costume which she had selected for the occasion might have been improved upon.

"It's fancy dress, you know," explained Mrs. Princevale.

"Will *all* the women wear trousers?"

"*These* are just like two skirts. They're perfectly modest. And they're heavenly to dance in."

"*That* I doubt," said Mr. Princevale, smiling.

"Just because you hate dancing."

"Well, I like Bougainvillier, and I think I'll go with you. I suppose I've been asked?"

"Of course. But you're not expected. *Why* do you go?"

"Why do you?"

"Because I shall enjoy myself."

"Well, so shall I!"

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He laid aside his evening paper and rose—a thick-set, good-natured man of forty. He yawned.

“There,” said she, “you’re sleepy already.”

“Why don’t you want me to go?”

“Because last time you spent the whole night in the smoking-room, and as you are not a drinking man . . . Oh, I don’t mean you drank too much! But you *did* feel sloppy the next day. You said so yourself.”

“Very well,” said Mr. Princevale. “I *won’t* go.”

“I hate to leave you,” she said, “but the exercise is so good for me. And it’s such fun to feel that you’re learning to do something that really requires skill and a good ear.”

“Yesterday morning,” said Princevale, “after your dancing class, you were so stiff and lame that you couldn’t get up. And as for skill”—a slight look of scorn crossed his mouth—“skill! I could pick up this ridiculous Tango in twenty minutes if I gave my mind to it.”

“Don’t talk nonsense. Why, you never even learned to waltz or to two-step.”

“No,” said he gravely. “I had to go to work when I was fourteen, and the result is that you are learning to dance the Tango in a pair of velvet trousers.”

“But they’re *not* trousers.”

“Pants, then!” exclaimed Mr. Princevale.

She made a face at him, but as she couldn’t make

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anything but a charming face, and as a moment later she kissed him on the lips, and as she was fifteen years younger than himself, and the tenderest and the sweetest young mother in the world, he was instantly mollified.

He got her great cloak, lined with mink, and wrapped it about her slender boyish figure (wrapped it closer than was necessary) and accompanied her, bare-headed (it was really bare on the very top), out into the wintry night, and put her into the big limousine, and tucked the rugs about her, and told her, with the least trace of huskiness in his voice (he was undoubtedly beginning to catch cold), to take good care of herself and have a good time.

The car glided out of sight behind a formal planting of tall cedars, and Mr. Princevale returned to his warm library, stood a moment or two very close to the fire, then once more sank into his big easy chair and reached for his evening paper. The first line that met his eyes, literally leapt into them from among the advertisements, was this:

Tango Taught in Ten Teachings,

and then:

Professor Casablanca, the famous Argentine exponent of the terpsichorean art, gives private instruction at his studios in the Wells Building, Forty-second Street, near Fifth Avenue. Terms moderate.

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Mr. Princevale said "Hum," reread the advertisement a number of times and finally tore it out of the paper and put it into his pocket.

The next day he lied to his wife.

"That you, dear? This is Henry speaking. Have a good time last night? I looked into your room, but you were sound asleep. . . . Yes, I'm at the office. I should think I *was* at the office. . . . And that's why I called you up. I can't make the 4.55. I'll come by the 6.02. A great deal of new business has turned up. . . . No, *good* business. . . . Did you dance all you wanted to? No broken bones, I hope. . . . What's that? . . . No, I won't miss the 6.02. So long, Honey."

Nobody but Mrs. Princevale could have been made to accept a sudden rush of business as an excuse. With Princevale, as with almost everybody else in the United States, business had never been so slack, nor were there any signs on the most distant horizon of approaching good times. It was as a friend of Princevale's had remarked to him that very day at lunch:

"First the Democrats destroy the prosperity of their country, and then they begin to destroy the country itself. I see the Hetch Hetchy Bill has passed the Senate. If that doesn't bring another earthquake on

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San Francisco—a sure enough one this time—there is no God!”

On his way to his office that morning Mr. Princevale had stopped off at the Wells Building in Forty-second Street to interview Professor Casablanca.

The professor's studio was a very little studio, indeed. But it contained a young girl of Spanish coloring, who was pretty enough to have graced the largest studio in the world.

“I came to see Professor Casablanca—is that how you pronounce it?”

“Not exactly,” said the girl, and she smiled very sweetly and apologetically. “But I'm sure it's the way it ought to be pronounced.”

“I came,” said Mr. Princevale, bowing and smiling his acknowledgment of the girl's compliment to his pronunciation, “to see if the professor could be persuaded to teach the Tango to a man of my age and figure.”

“My poor father,” said the girl hurriedly, “is in the hospital since night before last with a broken collar-bone. He was dancing the Tango with——”

“Good God!” interrupted Princevale. “I had no idea it was so dangerous.”

“Oh, only as my father might dance it on some great occasion with a partner of almost his own skill.”

“I hope the lady wasn't hurt.”

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"Nothing serious; only a few bruises and a wrenched knee."

"Well," said Mr. Princevale, "I am sorry. I had made up my mind to learn this new dance. Everybody's doing it, you know. Perhaps you could recommend me to a good teacher? I want to learn in ten lessons, because there is to be a big dance up in my part of the world just two weeks from to-day, and I—I've made a little bet with a friend . . ."

"Some of my father's pupils," said the girl, "have decided to continue their lessons with me!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Princevale, "I don't blame them."

He was so much in love with his own wife that even she did not mind his telling other women that they were pretty.

The señorita had flushed with pleasure.

"Could you teach me?"

"But how much do you know to begin with?"

"Nothing."

"You have never danced the Tango?"

"Never. And, furthermore, although I have seen it danced, I wouldn't know it if I saw it."

"It's easier when pupils don't have to be untaught first."

"Then *will* you teach me?"

"With pleasure."

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"Could you give me a lesson every afternoon, except Sunday, at half past four?"

"I will consult the engagement-book."

This lay on a little table in a corner of the room. She turned over the leaves, frowning slightly.

On the first page was written:

Professor Vallarosa Casablanca,
Engagements with Pupils.

And on the following pages nothing was written whatever.

She closed the book with a snap.

"I can just arrange it," she said.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Princevale; "till half past four, then."

"Till half past four."

"By the way, I haven't asked your terms."

"Only ten dollars a lesson, Mr. ——"

"Princevale."

He smiled.

"Is that really what is called moderate, Miss ——?"

"Ramona. Yes, indeed; some teachers ask and receive twenty-five dollars for a private lesson—some as much as fifty."

"Ten dollars it is, then," exclaimed Mr. Princevale merrily. "And if you can really teach me to tango it's dirt cheap."

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When he had gone Miss Ramona Casablanca sank on her knees and began to be at once extremely apologetic and extremely grateful to some person or persons who did not appear to be actually present. Then she addressed herself and said she was a bad, wicked, naughty girl; but God knew she just had to be under the circumstances, with father getting drunk and breaking his collar-bone, and not a penny in the bank, and almost all the wolves in the world howling at the Casablanca door. Then she wept a little.

Then she settled down to fast until Mr. Princevale should have come and had his lesson and gone and left some money behind him. Then she got a talking-machine out of a box, put on a disk, adjusted a needle, wound the thing up, set it going, and almost instantly stopped the jolly tune it had started to play. Then she wept a great deal.

At 4.30 to the moment Mr. Princevale once more entered the studio of Professor Casablanca.

"I think," said Miss Ramona, when she had complimented him upon his promptness, "that we had better begin at once."

"But, my dear young lady," said Princevale, "you look tired out. Would you rather begin tomorrow?"

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed the girl, for this would have

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made it necessary to starve for at least another twenty-five hours. "I only *look* tired."

"*Then*," said Mr. Princevale, "I am ready."

"First, then," she said, "I shall show you the steps without explaining them, so that you may get a general idea of the whole dance. Then I shall teach them to you one by one—at first we shall do without music."

And then, light as a kitten and graceful as—a girl, and without any affectation or self-consciousness, she began to dance. She danced as if she loved it. Her face, pale with hunger, colored like a rose; her eyes sparkled with romance, with mischief. Her lips parted in the most amiable and childlike smile.

Not only her feet but every part of her were in that dance. You could not have spared a tress of her strong, dark hair, or a flash of her great eyes. And yet it was such a dance as some queen or great lady might have danced (if she had known how). Spirit it had and movement, but over all a kind of delicacy, an exquisiteness of purity and good breeding. And as she warmed to the dance she began to hum a music that went with it—a music that was to become very familiar and charming to Mr. Princevale's ear, an ear very slow, be it said, to recognize one tune from another.

She stopped. Princevale sighed.

"It is like that," she said.

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"There's more in it than I ever thought," said her pupil; "more beauty, I mean."

She smiled upon him and then lifting her skirt a little that he might the better see the action of her feet, she repeated the first steps of the dance once or twice and then took it all to pieces and began to teach him the first little piece of all.

At five-thirty Mr. Princevale had sweated right through the back of his coat and was an enthusiastic convert to dancing. At five-thirty-one Miss Ramona Casablanca turned the color of cigar ashes and fainted dead away. At five-thirty-three she came to.

"My dear child, my dear child," Princevale was saying, "what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," she said in some bewilderment, "only I haven't eaten anything since yesterday. . . . Oh, I shouldn't have told you, but my father's account was overdrawn when he was hurt, and we make it a rule *never* to press our pupils to pay what they owe, and—you needn't hold me up. . . . I'm not going to fall. . . . I'm all right now. *Really*, I am."

"Well, I'm going to pay for my lessons as I take them, or in advance, if you'd rather!" exclaimed Mr. Princevale. "And now I have a train to catch. Put on your things quickly, that's a good girl. I'll take you to the nearest restaurant where there'll be somebody to look after you—and then make a dash for that train."

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He stood aloof while she put on her hat, but leaped forward with aid when it came to her coat. As they waited for the elevator he paid her for the lesson he had just had and for the next two or three that he was going to have.

Then he took her to one of those quick-lunch places that are all white tiles and bright nickel inside, took swift leave of her and ran for his train.

At 6.02 he stepped on the rear platform just as it made a faint lurch forward.

An hour later, having reached his station, Mr. Princevale found that the newly exercised muscles in his legs had stiffened to such an extent that he was obliged to ask the porter to help him negotiate the car-steps.

An acquaintance, perceiving this, spread the report locally that he had seen Harry Princevale leaving the 6.02 as "tight as a fiddle." Some people thought this was funny. Others believed it.

It was a well-fed, grateful, and happy Miss Ramona Casablanca who gave Mr. Harry Princevale his second lesson in dancing. He was very lame and stiff to begin with, but very much in earnest, and, it was soon apparent, a man out of whom nature had not entirely left the instinct for expressing emotion with his feet.

At this second lesson the talking-machine was heard in the land, and Mr. Princevale went to his train

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humming at the tune which it had repeated so often. It was a pleasant tune to his ear, having a certain quality that would have been stately if it hadn't been humorous and underrun by a strong but unusual rhythm.

At the end of the third lesson Miss Ramona told him that she had never had, seen, or heard of so promising a pupil. And this was not an interested compliment. He had learned to execute half the steps of the dance in perfect time and was beginning to put spirit into the work here and there.

That after ten lessons he would be able to surprise his wife beyond measure was now incontestable. He ran but one danger. Being a man who had not been in the way of taking regular exercise for many years, he perspired very freely during his lessons, and the chances of his taking a terrific cold were excellent. But by bundling up when he went out into the cold air and by having the gods favorably disposed, he avoided this autumnal pitfall and began presently to feel that he was growing younger and stronger, and that life had in it more possibilities of innocent and exhilarating amusement than he had ever suspected.

But he kept his own counsel and continued to speak of the modern craze for dancing with a good-natured contempt. It was only to Miss Ramona Casablanca that he spoke as he truly felt, and it was only to her

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that he confided his plans for surprising his wife and his friends with his prowess.

"Of course," he said, "I've seen her tango. But that was in those old stupid days when all dances looked alike to me. People tell me she does it beautifully. Well, on the way to this big dance I told you about I'm going to say, casually, 'Why, if I gave my mind to this Tango I could pick it up in twenty minutes.' She'll tell me not to talk like an idiot. I'll pretend to be provoked and I'll make her a heavy bet. Do you see?"

Miss Ramona nodded.

"When we get there I'll get her to show me the steps. It'll worry her a little, won't it, to see how quickly I'll pick them up?"

"It ought to," said Miss Ramona.

"Then I'll watch the others dance for a while, and then I'll sail up to my wife and I'll say, 'I believe I can make a pretty good stab at it already; try me out, will you?' And she'll laugh, and then I'll dance the whole thing through with her from beginning to end. And then won't she be surprised, and won't I have the laugh on everybody?"

"You certainly will," said Miss Ramona.

The eighth lesson came to an end in a blaze of glory. Miss Ramona was proud of herself and proud of her pupil, and said so.

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"Why," said she, "you know every bit of it now just as well as I do. And all you need is practice . . . to-morrow and next day we'll just dance it together over and over to give you finish and confidence."

What would Princevale's friends have said if, upon the following day they could have seen him, respectable business man that he was, burst smiling and humming into a room containing a beautiful young girl—if they could have seen him fling aside his hat and great-coat, advance upon her, still humming, and with a kind of coquettish sliding and pointing of his feet—if they could have seen the young lady go his smile of greeting one better—if they had seen her lift her elbows a little so that he could slide an arm around her waist—if after that they had seen the pair dance together about the room for a whole hour, only pausing every now and then to wind up the talking-machine—if, I say, Princevale's friends had seen all this, or any part of it, what would they have said? What could they have said? Alas! what *wouldn't* they have said?

The tenth lesson came to an end. Miss Ramona Casablanca sighed.

"It's been great fun teaching you," she said, "and it isn't because you're a good pupil; it's because you're a good man!"

Mr. Princevale bridled and blushed.

"As for you," he almost shouted with emotion,

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"you're a good girl, and the best teacher that ever lived. You wait till my friends see what you've done for me! You just wait! I'll send you pupils, rich ones, plenty of 'em, and—and if there's ever anything else I can do for you, *ever*, you just let me *know*."

She was strangely silent. The atmosphere was charged with the subtle emotion of a parting. And well it was for Mr. Harry Princevale, at that moment, that he was not only a married man, but in love with his wife; and well it was for Miss Ramona Casablanca that the god of love had only grazed her warm heart with his arrow instead of piercing it. A word from Princevale—another and better-aimed arrow from the love god's bow—and my favorite author would have been robbed of his plot.

With a certain emotion then, but with a circumspect, respectable emotion, they parted—to meet again.

The Princevales' big car purred in the night. Mr. Princevale was in the highest spirits. He had dined rather better than usual, and he felt that the hour of his triumph was at hand.

"Shouldn't wonder," he said, "if I tried my hand at a Tango before morning."

"It's danced with the feet," said his wife.

"It's merely a matter"—he ignored her saucy remark—"of putting one's mind to it. I'd bet money I

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could pick the thing up and dance it acceptably in twenty minutes or half an hour."

"I've heard you say that before, but you never actually put up the money."

"Reason why? Because it's almost like betting on a certainty."

"I'm willing to waive *that* excuse."

"You really want to bet?"

"If only to show you that there is more to the Tango than you are willing to concede."

"I'll bet you a thousand dollars."

"I haven't got a thousand, but I've got eight hundred."

"A thousand to eight hundred then. But you've got to help me. You've got to show me the steps just once—slowly. Then I'll watch the thing danced. Then I'll go away somewhere and practise by myself. And then I'll ask you to dance it with me, and if I don't make good the thousand is yours."

"It's a bet," said Mrs. Princevale, and visions of an unusually pleasant week of Christmas shopping began to float through her head.

The car turned into a long avenue that wound smoothly through forest trees and emerged presently into a brightly lighted space before a brightly lighted house. Strains of music reached them, and Mrs. Princevale's feet began to keep time. A little pale

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when they had started, the music got into her blood, and the blood went to her head like wine, so that even the footman who came forward to help her out of the car was dazzled by the radiance of her face.

"Remember," said Princevale, "you're to show me the steps."

And he went to the men's dressing-room, from which he emerged presently to wait for his wife. He was dressed to represent a gentleman of Louis XVIth's time, and it was this fact which made his face look so shiny and red.

Mr. Princevale stood with a number of other gentlemen who did not dance. "What is this they are dancing now?" he asked.

"Why, this is the Tango."

"*This?*"

Mr. Princevale studied the motions of the dancers more attentively, but could make nothing of them. He felt a little bewildered.

"*Sure* this is the Tango?"

"I ought to know, with an entire family dancing it from morning till night."

Suddenly Mrs. Princevale, flushed with excitement and happiness, swept up to the group.

"Like me to show you the steps now?"

He followed her, dumbly, into a corner, and there

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made a desperate effort to fix the steps which she showed him in his mind. In this effort he failed utterly.

"I didn't know it went like that," he said, all in a daze.

"There!" she said. "I've showed you the whole thing. I'll give you half an hour to practise and then—" she burst out laughing, so puzzled and woe-begone was her husband's face.

And he retired but not to practise. He was only sure of one thing, that the Tango which the Casablanca girl had taught him (for a hundred dollars) was not the Tango which was being danced in polite society. Why, even the music was different—grossly different. He retired into the smoking-room, to which a number of his friends had already retired. And then, because the evening was spoiled for him, and because it would be a very long evening, he braced himself with a whiskey and soda. And the talk became interesting, and he braced himself with another. And still he had that numb, dumb, miserable feeling of having been cheated, and he drank a third to see if it wasn't the same Bourbon which his friend Bougainvillier always drank. Men came and went: dancing men, wet with perspiration; non-dancing men, dry with boredom; but Mr. Princevale stayed and stayed. Presently he began to have the feeling that he had

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been especially asked to preside over the drinks. He welcomed all the newcomers whether he knew them or not. His jolly rosy face grew more and more friendly and benevolent. He began to make saucy little jokes and to burst more and more often into contagious laughter.

The evening became less and less spoiled as far as he was concerned. He ordered champagne to be brought and opened so that soon the effects of his labors began to be noticed even in the room where people were dancing. He was glad he had come, because all the men he talked to were so friendly and humorous. He was glad he had come, because the evening was still young and because the champagne was brut.

Princevale was alone in the smoking-room. He had opened one of the windows and was cooling his face.

His host came to find him.

"They're having supper, old man. Aren't you coming?"

Mr. Princevale merely looked at his host and beamed and beamed. Then he said in a confidential voice: "Just getting a mouthful of fresh air."

"Well, come with me and get a mouthful of supper."

"Think I better?"

"Of course. *You're* all right."

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"Certainly, *I'm* all right."

He braced himself and went with his host, walking steadily, but carefully, and beaming.

The guests were having supper in the ballroom, eating from plates on their knees. Men were constantly boring into the dining-room, and boring out again bearing delicacies. There was a subdued roaring of voices.

Suddenly the musicians began to play—a tune so catchy, so playful, so stately, so rollicking, and so old and out of date that it fell upon the ear with a delicious new freshness as of spring flowers. Women paused with forkfuls of salad half-way to their mouths; the murmur of voices ceased; everybody wanted to hear that fascinating tune.

Mr. Princevale with his host stood at this psychological moment framed by the great double doorway of the ballroom.

Through Mr. Princevale the first strain of the music had sent a sudden shudder of joy and excitement. He felt as Little John may have felt when, after the long years, he heard once more the notes of Robin Hood's bugle, and knew that his beloved master had come again to Sherwood.

And he advanced into the room. But that well-known music had got into his blood. Rosy-red, beaming, utterly unselfconscious, he advanced across the

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room, no longer with the cautious steadiness of the man who has had a little too much to drink, and doesn't want it known, but with the most fetching and fanciful little slidings and pointings of his feet.

The first person to perceive him was his wife.

"For heaven's sake look at Harry!" she said. And an echo of the cry ran around the walls of the room. "Look at Princevale!" Everybody looked. The leader of the little orchestra looked, and after one look he began to beam, and he turned to his musicians, now on this side and now on that, and put into their playing even more of the spirit of the dance, which Mr. Princevale was, well, not exactly dancing, but hinting at dancing.

Suddenly he perceived that he was perceived, and he came to a dead halt. At that somebody shouted, "More! More!" And somebody clapped their hands, and then everybody clapped theirs and shouted, "More! More!" And the orchestra leader swayed rhythmically from the waist and put more and more spirit into the dance—and Princevale's host beat a running and sliding retreat, and our hero himself wished to do this, but he was at bay; in every direction shouts of "More! More!" and clappings of hands headed him off.

For a moment the issue was in doubt. Then the beaming face parted in a beaming smile; courage and

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self-confidence had suddenly flooded Harry Princevale from head to toe.

He signalled to the musicians to stop—and to begin again at the beginning. And then, his left hand upon his hip, his right a little higher than his head—in perfect time, and with the most infectious grace and good humor—he danced the dance which Miss Ramona Casablanca had taught him, and which, because she was starving and needed the money, she had told him was the Tango.

An ovation greeted the end of his effortless effort. And they made him dance it again, and yet again. Then those most infatuated with dancing crowded about him. "What is it called? He *must* teach it to them. It was simply *too* fascinating. It had the Tango stung to death. Where had it come from? Was it from South America somewhere? etc., etc."

And Mr. Princevale's breast swelled and swelled and his face beamed and beamed, with perspiration, with happiness, with triumph.

It was five o'clock when the Princevales reached their house.

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Princevale (he was quite sober now), "I thought that with my natural gift for dancing I could pick up the Tango in twenty minutes. I was wrong. I'll give you your check in the morning."

"Never mind that!" exclaimed Mrs. Princevale.

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"Just show me again how that first step goes—there, is that it?"

"No, it's like this—you see as you point your foot you roll it a little to the side—no—watch *me*——"

On Monday morning, Mr. Princevale learned to his intense disappointment that Miss Casablanca no longer occupied a studio in the Wells Building, and had gone away without even leaving an address behind her. He sighed quite audibly. He had wanted so much to see her, not, as she may have imagined, with the purpose of reproaching her for having taught him some other dance than the Tango, and demanding his money back, but to exult with her and boast a little of the thunderous success he had achieved in that other dance which she had taught him.

He came, indeed, full of a happy and benevolent plan concerning Miss Ramona's future, and he went away feeling that New York is a very large city, and that perhaps she had escaped him forever. So he proceeded somewhat dismally to his office and passed a very dull forenoon, and brightened up a little at lunch, and returned to his office and was no sooner seated in the lea of his great desk than a clerk appeared with the news that a lady wished to see him.

"A book agent?"

"No, sir."

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"What sort of a lady?"

"A young lady."

"Hmm."

"What does she want to see me about?"

"I don't know, sir. Only she looks as if she'd been crying."

The clerk thought and hoped that he had unearthed a scandal, and showed it in his eager popping eyes.

"I will see her," said Mr. Princevale sternly.

The door of his private office closed—opened—closed. He looked up.

"God bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Miss Ramona!"

She came forward very swiftly, tears already trembling in her eyes.

"I knew you'd be angry," she said. "And so I ran away. And then I couldn't stand not telling you how sorry and ashamed I was; and I only did it because I hadn't any money and didn't know any other dance. And if you'll only give me time, I'll pay all the money back. But you'll never forgive me."

"Not if you begin to cry, certainly," he said.

And he pulled forward a chair for her, and he leaned toward her and spoke in a confidential voice:

"What is the name of that dance?"

"It hasn't any."

He made a note on his blotter and explained:

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"Important for it to have a name. We must think of one. Where did you get hold of it?"

"I made it up."

He slapped his knee—hard.

"Do you mean to tell me that you're the only person in New York who knows it?"

"And *you*. One girl besides me knew it, but she has gone west. Sister Louise was very fond of dancing before she was a sister, and sometimes over in the convent in Newark—she taught the piano, you know—we'd get her to play old-fashioned dances—so that we could dance a little. We had to dance in our bare feet so's not to make a noise or wear telltale holes in our stockings. And we didn't know any dances, and the ones Sister Louise remembered didn't have much go to them, and so we made that one up——"

"*You* made it up? You had a genius for dancing. But—is your father really a dancing-teacher?"

"Yes—but—oh, he's really in the hospital and——"
Her face became very troubled.

"Couldn't you tell *me*?"

She lowered her eyes and whispered:

"He drinks!"

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Princevale. "Horrible! . . . But now, my dear child, listen to me. This new dance—people are crazy about it—wild! They consider the Tango old-fashioned, obsolete—off with the

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old love, you know, and on with the new! And they won't be happy till they've learned this new dance—the Casablanca! And there are only two people in the whole world (and another who's gone west) who can teach it to them, and I—*won't*."

Here he beamed and beamed, and if she had been a gentleman he would have poked her in the ribs, for in the midst of his beaming he cocked his head on one side and looked very sly, and said:

"You get me, Steve?"

Without pausing for an answer he went right on. "You don't get me? Then listen some more. Mrs. Princevale and I are going to rent a nice studio for you, and it will be the fashion in our set to learn the Casablanca from you at twenty-five dollars a lesson. You are to be the rage, my dear. Three ladies who know their New York have said so. Ah! Don't! *Please* don't. What? No handkerchief? Here, take mine. . . . And when you've had your cry out, why, promise to be a good girl, and to do just what I tell you with all the money you're going to make. . . ."

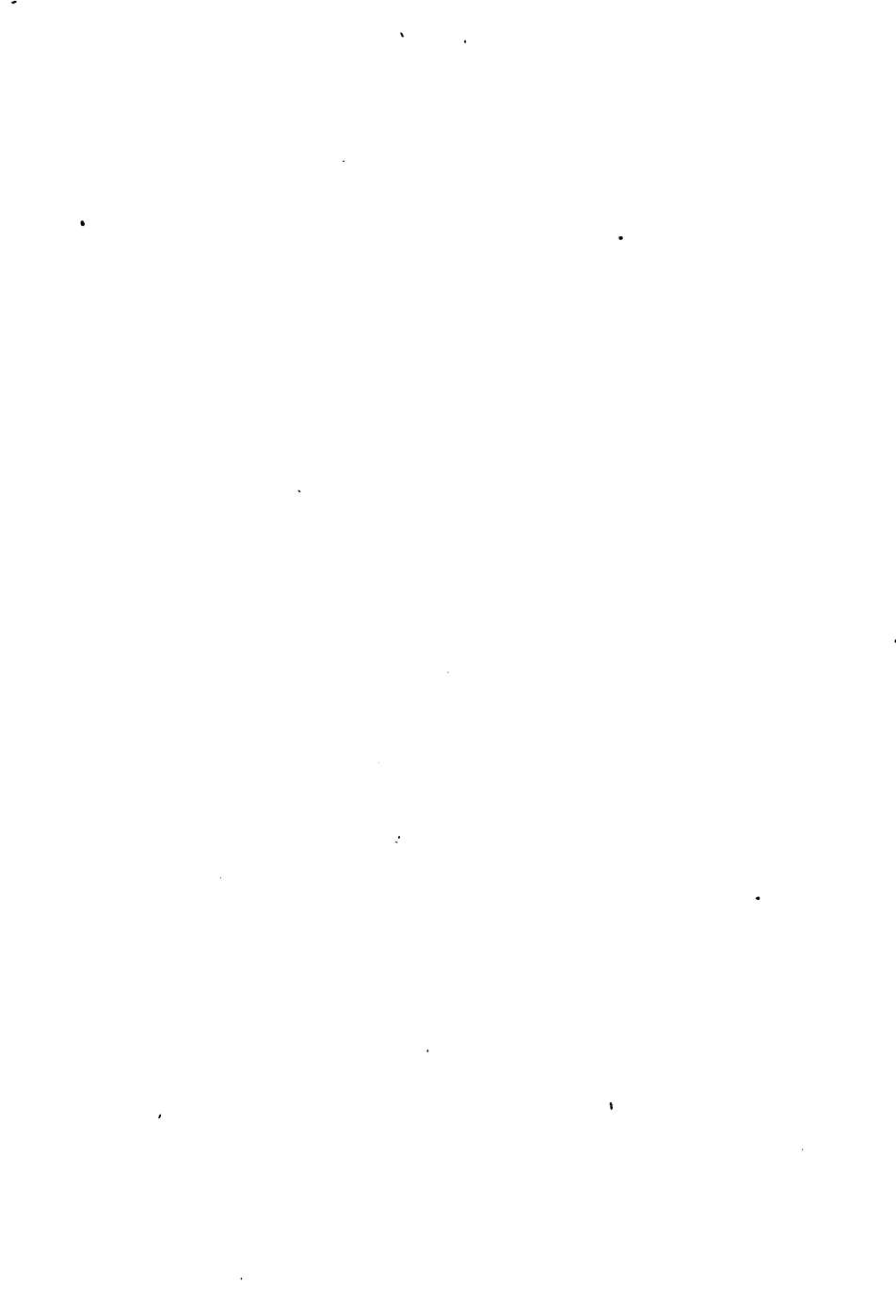
But she was on her knees now and trying her best to explain all sorts of things to certain persons who didn't exactly seem to be present; and when she had finished doing this she rose and the tears began to dry on her cheeks, and the corners of her mouth to twitch upward, and her eyes, almost embarrassingly fixed on Mr. Princevale's, to melt with tenderness.

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Mr. Princevale tried to say something rather cynical about "making a killing the first year, because fads die," but failed utterly; instead he said, almost roughly, "Here, give me back that handkerchief!"

Three months later Professor Casablanca, while dancing the Tango with a partner of almost equal skill, slipped on the ice-coated top step of a well-known restaurant, fell to the bottom and broke his neck, and, as the good, and now prosperous, Miss Ramona caused to be incised upon his tombstone—"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH IT



YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH IT

I

Jill was one of three sisters brought up to luxury and the pursuit of happiness. Her father was one of those plentiful Americans who make enormous incomes and, in the sanguine expectation of living forever, save nothing and leave nothing behind them when they die. A week before his death he looked good for another forty years of strenuous endeavor: a bull-built man, in the pink of condition, upon whom incessant toil had left no scars.

In the midst of life, then, and in a heyday of health, he took pneumonia and in seven days died. The house which he left behind was found to be in perfect order: assets balanced liabilities to a hair. The house itself was even found to be mortgaged to pretty nearly its entire value. And the necessity of earning a living was so dreadfully obvious to the three sisters that the sorrow natural to the occasion of a kind father's death and burial began very soon to sicken and was soon dead, too.

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The three sisters rode well, dressed well, played tennis well, and were not mentally deficient. But they couldn't cook or sew or typewrite or make artificial flowers or paint miniatures or, in fact, lend themselves to any useful or artful occupation. So they got themselves employed in a department store at a combined wage of eighteen dollars a week.

Margaret, cool and courageous, went into the business with her eyes open and with the will and the determination to rise. Jane went into it mournfully, Jill spitefully.

But Jill was a good-natured creature upon whom troubles did not sit with all their weight, and she was far prettier than her sisters and of a more showy disposition of mind. She supposed that she must always sell things across a counter, but she hoped not. Her dream for some months was marriage with a rich and attractive man who should take a fancy to her while purchasing celluloid side-combs. That she was in the comb department was against her chances, since those who came to buy were for the most part of the progressive sex, and if now and then a certain floor-walker lingered, it was impossible to conceive of him as either rich or attractive. Still, as long as her health was good she continued to dream of marriage and to crack jokes or exchange complaints with other girls with whom she was upon friendly terms. But when, toward the end

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of the Christmas rush, her brain, eyes, temper, and standing muscles began to play her tricks, she got into a morbid habit of wondering how long it takes a sick and discouraged young animal to drown. She made some crass mistakes in the execution of orders, and was in consequence presently summoned to the sanctum of Mr. Hemingway—one of the partners. When he saw how pale she was he smiled kindly enough and told her to sit down. Then he stared at her and discovered that, in spite of the pallor and distress, the good looks which had already secretly disturbed him were genuine and excellent and to be returned to their former effulgence by rest and money.

He was a man of some ease and grace, not much over forty, clean, dressed and groomed with great care; he showed a streak of vulgarity by wearing too many rings and by too often and too loudly clearing his throat in the presence of his inferiors. His boys, schooling at Groton, on the road to Harvard, would be gentlemen.

"What's the matter?" he asked presently—"over-work?"

"I think so."

"You have made one or two blunders lately."

"I know. And I'm very sorry."

He leaned forward a little. "Why don't you take a rest?"

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"On the savings of six dollars a week?"

He smiled in her face and said "No." And then, after a moment, leaning still farther forward until his chin rested in his beringed hands, "If I was your age, and a pretty girl—" he said, and stopped short.

A little color came into her cheeks.

"It's all a matter of conscience," he went on. "If a girl can make one step cheerfully and harden her heart against remorse, and be good to a man who would like to be good to her, she can rest very well on the savings of six dollars a week."

Jill rose wearily. Mr. Hemingway also rose.

"I came," she said, "to beg you to overlook my blunders and to give me a chance. As you have seized upon the golden opportunity to insult me, you are at liberty to fill my place."

Then it seemed to her as if her head was spinning round like a top, she staggered, and Mr. Hemingway assisted her back to the chair from which she had just risen.

"Don't be unkind," he said. "I didn't exactly insult you. I just told you of a possible way out. Forget it—if you can. I'm not a bad man. My wife has no use for me. I've got plenty of money, but there are other things in life, and sometimes a fellow dreams dreams. Well, I wake up once more. That's all there is to it. But don't walk out, please. Take a few days

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off. Your pay will go on just the same. Don't refuse."

"All right," she said. "Thanks."

But she did not rise. She was still miserably shaken and dizzy. She looked up at him, her eyes full of a dumb appeal.

"Don't be afraid of me any more," he said. "I ask frankly for what I want, always, and, if I get thrown down, that's the end of it."

In his heart he hoped, and had good reason to believe, that he had sown in her mind the seed of evil. Because she scorned his proposition was no earnest that she would forget it. And familiarity breeds contempt sometimes of even the most contemptible things. Let her get a little sicker, a little more discontented, a little more discouraged. Such things would not kill her.

II

And, in fact, she became sicker, more discontented, and more discouraged, until no life but one of ease and affluence seemed worth living, and for the latter no price seemed too great to pay. The difficulty was to convey this news to Mr. Hemingway, whose first advance had been his last.

But one day as he was passing the comb department,

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his head high, he stopped abruptly and said: "By the way——"

"Something this morning, Mr. Hemingway?" asked Jill, all saleswoman.

"Yes," he said, and, bending his head over the glass show-case, he indicated a comb, with a tapping point of his right forefinger, and whispered: "How's everything?"

Jill reached into the case for the tray containing the magnate's selection, and answered, in the same low tone: "Bad." So far as personalities went that was the end of their conversation at that time. Mr. Hemingway marched off to his sanctum with a near-shell comb in his pocket, and Jill turned to wait upon a lady with a red face and a white nose. But the talk, short as it was, had established a sort of bond between them, and, though Jill's heart beat the faster, she was not surprised at being summoned, later in the day, to Mr. Hemingway's sanctum.

"It's only to say," said he, "that you look wretched, and I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?"

He was not surprised when, after a moment's hesitation, she said "Yes" and tried to smile. He looked at her with a sympathetic puckering of the eyebrows but said nothing.

"It was very good of you," she said, "to give me a vacation on full pay. But the work's killing me. What's the use? I don't want to die."

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"Well?"

She rested her knuckles on his desk and leaned forward, and she spoke so hurriedly that Mr. Hemingway caught her words more by intuition than by ear.

"I'd rather be bad—than die."

The man rose and took her gently but persuasively in his arms. She felt herself ringed about with kindness. He held her strongly but without any show of passion, and he did not kiss her.

"Now, listen," he said, and because she had determined to do away with all responsibilities his voice was very soothing. "Circumstances," he went on, "have forced you. You're not a free agent. And I'm not altogether a bad man. Just concede me that for fun. I cling to it. I want you to go away—South somewhere—for a month. I'll put up the money. You'll get rested and full of health. If at the end of a month you still feel the same as you do now, I'll be glad. I like you a lot. You look to me like a good chance for happiness. But if your mind changes, come back, and we'll find room for you. Don't let the money distress you or seem an obligation; it's nothing to me."

She could feel his heart beating strongly, and he released her and smiled and patted her shoulder.

"When a man asks a girl to make a home for him," he said, "without becoming his wife, he assumes a heavy responsibility toward her, toward himself, to-

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ward society, and toward his God, if he's got one. And if the girl consents he wants to be mighty sure that she's had a fair chance to think the matter over in her *right mind*. But remember this: I like you a lot. And I'm not the kind of man that makes friends with people and uses them and throws them on the scrap-heap. You're to choose between virtue and six dollars a week and ease and luxury for always. But it may be, if you choose the latter—and go up against the world's best judgment of what is right—that some day you'll get terribly punished. And I run that chance, too. Remember this, too, that it's almost impossible to do what the world thinks is wrong without getting punished. You can't get away with it. For my part, I'm so hungry for some one cheerful and pretty who'll be kind to me and friends with me that—well, I'm ready to take the gaff. I'm tough. But maybe you are tenderer than you think. I like you so much that I'm trying to open your eyes, to make you see clear."

She had stood all this while with bowed head, listening; now she lifted her face, white, indeed, but a little troubled. "I want to play fair, too," she said. "My idea was—oh, just to sell out. But it's not as bad as that. That's good. I'll go South and take a month to think it over. But I think the answer isn't far off."

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III

He had to be very patient with her at first. She wouldn't let him buy jewels for her or settle money on her. "I was a gift," she said. "Don't try to make me feel that I wasn't. Things we share—that's different. Pay what you please. But things for me only—oh, I've got to be decently dressed, but I refuse to be adorned. Are you happy with me? Then be satisfied and grateful. Put any more load on my conscience, and I stop smiling, stop laughing, stop playing the game."

"Needs must," he said, "when the Dear Heart drives. I'm happy."

But he was not. If she felt degradation in her position she concealed the fact admirably. She was loyal to him and fond of him. She was steadily cheerful and, in his judgment, amusing and helpful to him. But, since love is insatiable, he wanted more. He wanted love and had believed that some day she would feel it for him. But many months passed and her feeling for him was strong friendship, affection, and fondness. She trusted him absolutely, and believed in his goodness, the honesty of all his intentions toward her, and in his business genius. So what more could the poor fellow want? Well, he wanted her love, and he could not win it.

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Two years passed. Sometimes she frightened him with "Don't be frightened, but suppose—just suppose I fell in love with somebody?"

"You mustn't," he would answer. "You don't know what you're saying. Never mind me, but think of yourself. You can't lie; it's not in you. You'd just make yourself so wretched that——"

But it amused her at times to play with the thought of love. "Suppose I told him everything, and he forgave?"

"Men don't forgive—not the kind of men you could love." This with bitterness, since it seemed that of these he was never to be one.

"Oh, but surely—sometimes."

"Never, really. They say the words but they don't feel 'em, or their minds say 'em and their hearts renege. There must always be times—lots of times—when a man can't keep his mind off horrors. Believe me, men don't forgive. Ask any one you can get a frank answer out of. They don't! They can't!"

He shuddered and went on:

"Jill, little Jill, you're always wondering about love. Why can't you learn it from me—at first hand? Can't you love me? Never? Not ever?"

"I wish I could," she said. "You are very good to me. I am fonder of you than anybody in the world—if that's any use."

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One thing had been very hard for Jill to bear. Immediately on her confessing to them that she was keeping house for Mr. Hemingway her sisters had resigned their positions in the department store and sought work elsewhere.

"He might," Margaret said, "feel it his duty to favor us in some way or other, and you could hardly expect us to stand for that."

As this was precisely what Mr. Hemingway had every intention of doing, Jill was bitterly disappointed.

"It's rather hard," she said, "that nobody is to benefit by my own rottenness but me. I elected myself to go under with the idea of helping us all."

Sometimes she visited her sisters in their lodging-house, but her visits were never returned. Affection they had for her and easy good manners, steering, however, widely clear of all dangerous topics. It was not until Jane's marriage that a real break came in their sisterly relations. Jill was not allowed to come to the wedding or to send a gift. The bridegroom had been told of the family disgrace and would not have it.

Hemingway, finding her in a distressed and bitter mood, asked what the trouble was, and she told him.

"Jane," she said, "is marrying to-morrow. I'm not asked; that's all." And then, the words coming more rapidly: "You said I might be punished. Well, it's coming—it's coming. I'm beginning to get

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what's coming to me. I'd give my soul to be back in the department store at six per. I'd give my soul to be pure."

"You make me unhappy, Jill. And as for purity——"

"Oh," she cried, "we've tried before now to argue that we are as good as married. But we aren't. Marriage is marriage."

"I'd give my soul to marry you."

"But you can't. And marriage is marriage. Oh, I'll get over this jolt. There's nothing time can't cure. But just now—my own sister's wedding—not even send a present——" And at this point, in the telling American of it, she "blew up."

It began with shrill laughter and ended in agonized, writhing sobs. Between these extremes tears leaped clear from her eyes. Hemingway was powerless to soothe, and, without showing any sign of it but a tender gravity, he suffered as much as she did. He found it necessary afterward to visit the sideboard and take one of his very rare drinks.

This done, he stood in great melancholy, looking out a window. She came upon him softly from behind and put her arms around him. He turned and caught her to his breast. She was in one of her melting, penitent moods. Almost, at that moment, she loved him.

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"I'll be a good sport," she said. "I won't try your patience any more. I wouldn't blame you if you sent me away; but please don't. I couldn't get along without you, you're so good to me—so good."

He held her closer and closer.

"Only, please—to-morrow at twelve—that's when the wedding is—be with me if you can."

IV

A few months later Jill began to notice changes in Hemingway. He seemed to be tired and depressed. He seemed to have renounced all hope of winning her love; to be at times in fear of losing even such friendship and affection as she could give him. He spoke often of the future, more especially hers, taking it for granted that some day their relation must come to an end, and inquiring of his mind and of fate what had to become of her in that event. In many ways he had aged suddenly, and always in his eyes, even when he laughed or smiled, there was a lurking of trouble. But he said that business had never been better, that his boys were "doing him proud," that he was not troubled, but happy and at peace in his mind. If he was happy, it was as the weary and the passive are happy, as those are happy who have lived out their passions, their agitations, their lives, and are content, clinging

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childlike to those they love, to wait patiently for the definite end.

One night he complained of his head. He was unable to eat any dinner, said that he feared he was going to be sick, and told the servant to telephone for a taxicab.

"I'd better go back," he said, "to what the world is pleased to call my home. I'll write in the morning and tell you how I am. I feel very bad; but maybe it will pass."

Jill was most tenderly solicitous. If he was really going to be sick she wanted to nurse him. She couldn't bear to think of him among strangers. He smiled.

"Yes," he said, "that's what they are—strangers. But I'll be round and about in a day or two. Blast such a head!"

"Where does it hurt?"

"It doesn't. It is just an intolerable heaviness."

The servant announced the taxi.

Jill went down-stairs with Hemingway and helped him into his coat. "I wish you didn't have to go," she said.

"Really, Jill? Is that the truth?"

"Of course it is."

He looked into her face a long time, his brows knitted, as if he found difficulty in focussing his eyes. When he spoke, it was thickly, almost as if he had been drinking.

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"Must remember every dear line," he said, "every dear curve. Kiss me."

She was so sorry for him that she kissed him with all but the most genuine ardor. It was almost as if for one fleeting moment she loved him.

"Oh, God! How good!" he said, and turned and went slowly down the steps.

The next day, having had no word from him, she managed to learn in a roundabout way that he was down with typhoid. Anxiety for him was her first thought; her second was anxiety for herself. If he died, what was to become of her? He had made no settlement upon her; he would be too tactful to put her name in his will. Did she even own the furniture of the little house under the rose which they had so peacefully inhabited together? Was the rent paid? And, even if it was, the butcher's account was still running, and the grocer's. She tried her best to think only of Hemingway, but discovered that even in her prayers for his recovery there was a chilling admixture of self-interest. Such prayers, I fancy, are of very little use on high. Anyhow, while she was in the midst of uttering one of them, Hemingway died.

Jill did not even go to his funeral. She had neither suitable clothes nor money to pay for any. But her mourning for him was absolutely genuine. And for as many as forty-eight hours she did not once think of

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herself or of the dreadful problems of life which appeared to confront her.

He had been dead a week, and she lived on in the house which he had taken for her. And every day the butcher brought meat and every night the meter registered a further consumption of electricity, and what would happen when people discovered that her establishment no longer had money with which to pay its bills she could not guess. She was too anxious and unhappy to do anything but drift.

But one afternoon a youth in deep mourning called upon her. His words at first came very shyly. He was Hemingway's son, he managed to convey. Jill knew that. Between himself and his father there had always been much confidence. She knew that, too. His father was the finest man God ever made. She could not object to that. Whatever his father did was right.

"I've known about you," said young Hemingway at last, "for six months. You made my father very happy. I want to thank you for that."

To Jill the interview was very painful; and she could see no reason for it until the son finally blurted out:

"Father told me to look after you. He didn't want to trust anybody but me. You see, he couldn't very well put your name in his will, could he? And he was

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taken sick in the midst of health, and before he'd had a chance to make any settlement—or——”

“Don't,” said Jill. “I *can't* take money from you.”

“It won't be from me. It's from him. He gave me money and left it to my honor to see that you got it. No names get mentioned, do you see? Now, when may I bring it round? It's quite a lot—two hundred thousand dollars.”

“Oh, I can't,” said Jill. “It's being paid for what was given.”

“Father said there wasn't money enough in the world to pay for what you gave him—a home, tenderness, good temper. Please don't make trouble.”

“All right,” said Jill shortly. “*You're* sure it's all right?”

He nodded gravely.

“To-morrow, then,” said Jill, “at this time. Will that be convenient?”

“Absolutely. And good-by till then.”

The young man found withdrawal somewhat difficult, but at last managed an exit, the crimson deepening in his cheeks the while. He had expected that his father's mistress would be a mature woman of a certain type; that she had been a lady, and was but little older than himself, had upset all his calculations and all his carefully prepared speeches.

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The next day he brought her the money, and, being his father's son, gave her some excellent advice as to its investment.

V

Newspaper advertisements to the contrary notwithstanding, there is for all those ills to which the flesh is heir but the one cure—Time. And what Time has not time to cure he may well leave in the able hands of his famous assistant—Death.

The roots of Jill's life had not gone very deep into her affair with Hemingway. She had no especial affection for the house in which they had lived together, nor did she, after a few weeks, wake in the night startled to find herself alone. Life with him had never descended into routine. There had been no definite habit to his comings and goings. As a couple, they had never really been settled. At first, then, she missed him because she couldn't help it; then because she thought it only decent to miss him; and then, behold, one morning in Paris, she waked up to a breakfast of chocolate and rolls and honey and was honest with herself, and admitted that she no longer missed him at all, and that health, freedom, ten thousand a year, and the pursuit of happiness were the only things worth thinking about. "Who's to know what I've been through," she thought gayly, "if I don't tell them?"

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And, indeed, she looked far too young and fresh and innocent to be suspected of a past by the most cynical. And she must have had a more morbid conscience than the average to have inflicted her story on every new acquaintance.

She made many: first, in London, a Mrs. Meredith, a handsome Englishwoman of forty. The two became fast friends, made a short motor trip together, enjoyed every minute of it, and a week later were making plans to go around the world together.

Their long journey began delightfully. There were always devoted men about to see to the hard details of travel for them. Colors glowed, lights shone, climates caressed; and, since they never became really intimate, they never bored each other.

Jill passed for a well-placed American girl, well-to-do and of a childlike innocence. She looked even younger than she was, and, what with the wonderful succession of new interests, lost every glimmer of remorse and self-consciousness and behaved as she felt. And she felt, poor soul, not in the least like a tainted thing, but like a young girl and a beautiful one out to have a good time in the good, green world. If now and then she thought of the past it was with an awful and mistaken cynicism.

As a matter of fact, her conscience, tired out with much suffering, had gone to sleep, and was peacefully dreaming in the calm which precedes the storm.

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On board the *S. S. Bengal*, outward bound from Calcutta—destination Colombo—Jill found herself next at table to a young American whose mere proximity disturbed her curiously. She had known handsomer men, and more entertaining. Harry Adams was neither beautiful nor brilliant. But he was brilliantly alive. His dark, rather deep-set eyes had a superabundance of light; his skin was of a fine, smooth brown, broadly splashed across the cheeks with crimson; he was neither fat nor lean, but a perfect young animal in the pink of condition. Joyousness and the love of innocent living radiated from him, together with stirring laughter. He neither smoked nor drank. And, blushes mixed with forwardness, he proceeded without waiting any time whatever to scrape acquaintance with Jill. The seeds of his magnetism fell upon fertile soil. If his words were not worth listening to, the quality of his voice and the nearness of so much energy and youth were more exciting than sudden martial music. Then and there she fell crazily in love with him.

In the dusk they leaned against the steamer rail and looked across the muddy Hoogli at the low-bushed shores of Bengal. They prattled like two children. He told her that he was a graduate of Harvard, going round the world before settling to an occupation. He was to meet a friend at Colombo, a "bully chap." They were going to have "a high old time." "Improve a little every day." It wasn't true that the world

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was full of snares and pitfalls, was it? Life was what you made it, wasn't it? The main thing, as good old Kipling said, was to keep your pores open and your mouth shut. "I've been in trainin'," he said, "ever since school. And, what's more, I'm never going to drink or smoke. What's the good? Some day I'll—oh, when I meet the right girl. I'm going to so live that I won't have anythin' rotten to confess."

Jill shivered.

"Say," he said after a silence, "I think you're great."

"Why?"

"Oh, every feller has a sort of ideal."

She turned her eyes away and downward. She watched the murky water scooting along the iron sides of the ship. They did not speak for some time. At last Adams said:

"What's the matter? Don't you feel right?"

"I'm all right," she said.

"It's been a godsend to meet you," he said.

Jill managed a lame little laugh. "Aren't you rather a cheeky person?" she said.

"I don't know. Am I? Just because I find it a privilege to know you?"

"But you don't know me. Probably you never will."

"Why not? We've a week before us."

"And a good many years behind us."

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"Oh, they don't count. It's now that counts."

He laughed awkwardly and asked her if she believed in love at first sight, and she, of course, having recently fallen in love at first sight, said that she didn't. He told her about his home, his mother and sisters. He unrolled for her perusal the white scroll of a very short, very innocent, very joyous, very affectionate life. His ambitions centred upon love and marriage. And Jill, in the depths of her suddenly awakened conscience, suffered the tortures of the damned, and she kept saying to herself: "You can't do wrong and get away with it. You can't; you can't."

On the third night of their acquaintance they were strolling the deck. Adams by now was as violently in love with Jill as she with him.

"What's behind that ventilator?" he said suddenly.

"I don't see anything."

He walked into the darkness back of the ventilator, and she followed. He turned and took her in his arms. His voice had a new, masterful quality.

"I can't help it," he said, "and you've got to take the gaff."

"Don't," she said. "Please, don't."

But she gave him back his second kiss with all the passion of a tigress.

"It's all right?" he said. "You'll marry me?"

"Yes!" she said. "Yes!"

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VI

It seemed to Jill obvious that she must never tell. Life had presented her with a chance for happiness at the price of silence. And cheap at the price, her mind said. But conscience, wakened from long sleep, said other things, so that more and more it became difficult to look her honest young man in the eyes, more and more difficult to receive his adoration and his worship of her purity with equal ears. He had placed her on the highest pedestal which his heart and his ideals could conceive, so that the shame of standing there to be worshipped burned her like a fire. Must this shame be everlasting? Was there no forgiveness? Not even if she gave with all her heart and soul all that she had to give of tenderness and understanding? Mind said: "Surely; surely. You will get so used to playing the hypocrite. Furthermore, sin is not physical but mental. If he never knows that you have sinned, then, so far as his happiness is concerned, there is no sin in you. If by living a lie you can make another human being absolutely happy, is it not justifiable so to live? Go ahead; tell him! What will happen? This: you will break his innocent, manly, generous heart. Worse, you will destroy that which in man is noblest—his ideals and his beliefs. You have played the game once. Play it again."

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But the words which conscience spoke were stabbing and torturing. She loved with all her heart and was so loved. And there was no untainted happiness to be had.

One starry night, in the shadow of the deck-house, his arm about her, his cheek against hers, "Jill," he said, "I never even thought I loved anybody but you. Do you like being a man's first and last and all-the-time love? But"—there was pain in his voice—"I suppose you've thought——"

"I've never loved any one but you," said Jill. "Never thought I did, even."

"Oh, thank God for that," he said. "Because—because why? I kiss you. Lips, please! And half the happiness is the kiss and half is knowing that where I kiss there's no shadow of other kisses. I never thought about it before I loved you, but I tell you I know now how men go crazy with jealousy and shoot to kill. Don't you ever dare to fall out of love with me and in with somebody else—'cause I wouldn't hurt *you*, but——"

And the mere thought turned his heart cold, so that for a moment she could feel no love from his encircling arm.

"I'll always love you," she said humbly, "till I die. But—please don't think about awful things. And—I—I mean, suppose things *should* happen and we never

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could get married—am I the worse for your kisses—or you for mine? They don't leave any mark. They——”

“They *do* leave marks—on the heart they leave them.”

So far, the young people had been so busy making love to each other that plans for the future had hardly been touched with discussion. They wished to be married upon landing in Colombo, and at the same time admitted that this was out of the question. Adams was to meet his friend and go on around the world with him, and Mrs. Meredith was strongly opposed to being deserted by Jill.

Indeed, she spoke her mind to them both, and they were unable to find fault with her common sense.

“I grant that you are madly in love with each other,” she said. “It isn't the first time that such a thing has happened to anybody in the world. Having lasted a week, your love is eternal. So, separate for six months, finish your travels, and there will be no harm done and no diminution of affection. Of course, if there *should* be—but that is out of the question—you will both live to thank me!”

The S. S. *Bengal* anchored at last off Colombo, and the passengers, descending bag and baggage to an excessively fat P. & O. tender, were in high spirits at the prospects of shore, punkahs, cooling drinks, high ceil-

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ings, and elbow-room. Jill and Adams stood well forward, very close together. They had so much to say to each other that even a tenth of it couldn't be said.

Jill at last had grown fixed in her intention to snatch happiness at the awful price of hypocrisy and silence. Her conscience had protested until it was tired. It was almost ready to submit to the great wrong and go to sleep again. The poor fool was almost happy. She felt able to play any part without a slip. Adams would never know. He never could know.

The tender chugged closer and closer to the wharf. Features of coolies and white people became discernible.

"Do you know," said Jill, "you've never told me your friend's name?"

Adams laughed. "I haven't? Well, that's he—the big fellow in the white suit, with the Harvard hatband."

Jill's eyes followed the point of her lover's finger. And then she saw and knew that the game was up. For the big fellow in the Harvard hatband was Hemingway's son.

She turned white. She wilted like a flower.

"And his name," said Adams, "is Hemingway, and—For God's sake, what's wrong, Jill?"

Her voice was like something being torn. "Better for me to tell," she said, "than for him."

"Better for me to tell . . ."

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And when she had told, her meaning was half a minute sinking in. Then young Adams's face and strong body stiffened and became set.

"I thought I could fool you," she said. "It seemed to mean so much to us both. God bless you and make you happy some other way, and good-by forever."

"Forget it," said young Adams. "I love you. It's all right."

But it was not all right. Six months later, according to appointment, he called upon her in New York. The months had been like years to him. His voice had a cynical quality. His breath smelt of recently swallowed cocktails, and he asked if he might smoke.

"Well, Jill," he said, "it's no use. I've tried to forget, and I can't. There might be children. It wouldn't be fair to them. I've thought it all over."

She crossed the hotel parlor and stood looking into his face. She loved him terribly.

"You can't do wrong," she said, "and get away with it. I know that. But I love you so that when I think I'm not to see you any more I just want to curl up and die. I know I'm only getting what was coming to me, but—" Tears gathered in her eyes.

"It doesn't seem to me, either," said Adams grimly, "as if I could live without you, Jill. But I'm going to; that is—unless——"

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He leaned toward her, his eyes suddenly overflowing with light. She gave one short, ugly cry of anguish and struck him furiously across the mouth.

**A PERFECT GENTLEMAN OF
PELHAM BAY PARK**

A PERFECT GENTLEMAN OF PELHAM BAY PARK

I

I seldom pick up a magazine nowadays without reading a story about a man and a girl on a desert island; and I seldom pick up a pen without wishing to write such a story. It's the most tempting situation imaginable. Anything can happen, and usually does. And they always fall in love.

The usual desert island is a tropical paradise not yet settled by mosquitoes. And the artist always manages to dress the girl stylishly; and, if he knows his business, she's always pretty.

There are desert islands in Greater New York. There is one in Pelham Bay Park, not a quarter of a mile from the railway bridge across Eastchester Creek; but it wasn't always a desert. Mother Goose used to live there, and to this day the island is called by her name.

Mother Goose lived in the smallest white cottage I ever saw. She kept a flock of white geese, and sometimes there appeared to be a sort of corn-patch on the

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island. It's a little bit of an island. A man with a glass arm can throw a stone from the beach on one side into the water on the other. It's just a rock with a few pockets of soil and a few stunted cedars and a little goldenrod in autumn and some wild asters and a few mallows.

Years and years ago Mother Goose vanished. But for a long time her little house withstood the weather, and served to remind us that such a woman had actually existed and kept geese.

The miracle is not how they drifted under Pelham Bridge without knowing it, but how they drifted under the railroad bridge as well. It merely goes to show that if a fog is thick enough you actually cannot see your hand in front of your face.

Of all the men who ever took a girl out rowing and was cast away with her upon a desert island, I think that "Red Monday" was the most to be pitied—at first. He, Mary Flynn (the girl he thought he loved), Tom Brady, and a girl friend of his (Red Monday thought the name was Ryan, but wasn't sure) had elected to spend a happy Saturday in Pelham Bay Park.

It was during the swimming that Red Monday fell from favor in his lady-love's eyes. A good swimmer (though an indifferent boatman), it occurred to him that it would be humorous to dive, swim under water,

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and pinch the calf of her leg. As a matter of fact, this would not only have convinced Mary of his humor but of his (sometimes doubted) statement—that he was always thinking of her.

The lower classes have somewhat crude ways of showing thoughtfulness. And what a relief it is, by the way, now that our legislatures have passed an income tax, that we are legitimatized in dividing people into two classes—an upper class, or aristocracy, who pay the tax, and a lower class, composed of riffraff, who don't. Before this happened, one was always afraid of treading on toes. But the will of the people, as expressed by the Democratic majority, has at last accomplished what even the most royal and purple Republican feared to do.

Our swimming party, then, belonged to the lower classes, and for these reasons: they were short on education and income and their sense of humor was altogether practical.

Mary Flynn did not make a fuss because her lover pinched the calf of her leg; she made a fuss because he didn't. Pelham Bay waters were not very clear that day, and in the submarine murk Red Monday selected a perfectly strange calf and gave it the most sudden and affectionate pinch imaginable.

When he came to the surface, ready to burst with laughter, a young man of about his own age and twice

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his size blacked his eyes for him, ducked him, and held him under till he was half drowned. And while this was going on the lady of the strange calf (that isn't my exact shade of meaning, but let it pass) screamed piercingly.

And Mary was very cold with him and unpitiful, and instead of inviting him to take her for a row (as she had promised) she invited Brady. And Red Monday was confronted with the proposition of either inviting the Ryan girl to go rowing with him or of playing the cad (a word not in his vocabulary).

Well, he sullenly invited her, and she, having longed to be rowed by Brady, as sullenly accepted. And then the girls went to their bath-houses to dress and the young men went to theirs. And half an hour later they had hired rowboats and were heading for the Stepping Stone light.

Although he couldn't be in the same boat with his Mary, it was Red Monday's open intention to keep the boat in which she fared with Brady within sight and hearing. But his work was cut out for him. Brady not only had the better boat but knew how to row. And what the Ryan girl knew about steering and sitting in the middle could have been printed on a postage-stamp in letters a foot high. She was one of those girls who are no sooner in a boat than they have to lean to one side and trail one hand in the water.

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His eyes swollen, his breath gone, the skin rapidly coming off the palms of his hands, his rival's boat leading now by a quarter of a mile, Red Monday was a youth to be pitied. And he pitied himself almost to excess, but he pitied no one else. Mary Flynn and Tom Brady he hated with a great hatred. But most of all he hated the Ryan girl; pale and delicate in appearance, it seemed to him that she must weigh at least half a ton.

"Say," said he at last, "can't you find the middle of the boat and stay there?"

She merely giggled.

"Quit your kiddin'," he said sternly.

"What's the use?" said she. "You couldn't catch up with Tom Brady in a million years, and I like to paddle my hands."

Red Monday rested on his oars.

"All right—paddle," he cried angrily.

"All right—I will."

And they sat looking at each other for some time.

"Gawd!" said the Ryan girl suddenly, "but you're a sight with them eyes. You're enough to make a sick calf laugh."

"When you laugh," said Red Monday sternly, "you *look* like a sick calf."

She glanced over his head and said in a tone of great interest:

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"Yes—no."

Red Monday looked over his shoulder and saw only Tom and Mary far off, the former resting on his oars and leaning forward.

"Yes—no—what?"

"Nothing. It looked for a moment as if Tom was going to kiss her. She was trying to get him to."

"Aw, shut up!" said Red Monday.

"Aw, shut up yourself!" said the Ryan girl.

"Do you know what I'd do to you for two cents? I'd tie a sinker round your neck and heave you into the briny."

"Well, I'm sure," said the Ryan girl, "if I thought I was to have much more of your company I'd be obliged to you."

"I should worry," snarled Red Monday.

"Then you must have found out what people think of you."

The youth bit his lips and then he quoted from a play which he had once seen from the gallery:

"Your mother," he said, "must have been awful fond of children to raise you."

The Ryan girl, unable to think of a crushing repartee, contented herself with throwing a large handful of salt water into his open mouth.

"*That* ends it!" cried Red Monday, and he gave a furious tug at both oars. They both came out of their

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locks, and our hero's head went over backward against the low seat with such violence that he was knocked senseless.

He lay limp and still, and the Ryan girl's unseemly mirth came to a sudden end. She began to call to Tom and Mary, but had no answer. They appeared infatuated with one another.

As she looked and called and tried to make them hear, she wondered why they and their boat had such a misty appearance, and, looking beyond them for a cause, she saw that the Long Island shore had disappeared behind a low-hung curtain of fog, from which there issued presently the long-drawn, melancholy note of a fog-horn. A moment later Tom and Mary disappeared utterly from view, and the Ryan girl, in her thin summer dress, was shivering with cold.

Meanwhile, Red Monday stirred, opened his eyes, groaned, and then swore in a whining, bitter voice.

"Lucky you hit your head," said the Ryan girl, "or you'd 'a' been killed."

Red Monday raised himself to a sitting position. The boat, thanks to the wind which had blown the fog in from the Sound, was now bobbing smartly up and down.

"Where's the oars?" asked Red Monday, ready to place blame where it belonged.

"How do I know? You t'rowed them overboard. Say, do you often have 'em?"

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"Have what?"

"Fits."

"Gee!" said Red Monday, "but you've got the feminine appeal strong, I don't think."

He looked this way and that, and presently stood up, a flash of alarm in his battered eyes. In every direction, at a distance of a few yards, his vision was cut sharp off by the smoky fog.

"Talk about the babes in the wood!" said the Ryan girl, and she bit her lip to keep from shivering. Not for the world did she wish Red Monday to know that she was even physically uncomfortable.

"This is real pleasant," she said, "after all the hot weather."

Red Monday reached for his jacket and put it on.

"Glad you like it," he said, "because I need this rag."

He seated himself and folded his hands over his knees.

"Do you mind smoke?" he asked sweetly.

"Yes," said the Ryan girl.

Red Monday found a cigarette and lighted it, remarking in a still sweeter voice: "Some do."

The Ryan girl made the snorting noise of the outwitted. The smoke of the young man's cigarette blew into her face. She sniffed reminiscently.

"What brand do you smoke?"

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"Why?"

"Nothing, only it smells just like a Russian-Jewish family's swill can."

"Well," he acquiesced, "you ought to know. But it's news to me, as I ain't never made a practice of——"

"Oh, you know what I mean!" was torn from the Ryan girl.

"Sure, I do," he said soothingly. "It ain't nothing to be ashamed of—if you fight against it and do your best to break the habit."

The Ryan girl, against her own sweet will, shivered from head to foot.

"Cold?"

"With a difference. It's the way you feel in the reptile home."

"Me being the snake?"

"You get me, Steve." Then, in a casual tone, "How long you going to keep me here?" she asked.

"I ain't keeping you," he said hurriedly. "Don't stay on my account."

To have been able to say, "Oh, very well," to have leaped overboard, to have swum ashore through the fog would have seemed heaven to the Ryan girl. Unfortunately, she could only swim when the water wasn't over her depth.

Her lovely coloring was yielding to a bluish tint. The fog was not only cold but heavily damp. She

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was only thankful for one thing—that her hair curled naturally.

“If I had oars,” said Red Monday, “I could row——”

“Not if you lived to be a million. But you could catch crabs with a baby’s rattle.”

“If the fog don’t blow off,” he continued, “and if we don’t drift ashore, we’ll be out here all night. There’s only one thing I mind about that. People’ll say I done it on purpose.”

As the French say, this gave the Ryan girl seriously to think. Her reputation, being about the only thing she possessed aside from her beauty and a rhinestone horseshoe, was very precious to her.

“I don’t mind being called a fool,” continued Red Monday, “but I’d hate to have my friends think that, even in the thickest fog there ever was I’d picked *you* for company.”

She merely set her teeth, and for half an hour neither of them spoke. But Red Monday watched her closely out of his battered eyes. It was obvious that she was suffering mentally and physically. And he could not but admire the stiffness of her upper lip.

“This bay’s full of currents—” he began.

“So’s a fruit-cake,” she replied, and bit back the tears.

“And sooner or later we’ll get somewhere.”

“I may, but you won’t—not on the help of brains you got when they passed round the b-b-basket.”

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"Better not let your teeth knock together like that—china breaks easy."

"Shows how much *you* know! I've never even had a filling."

"Then I guess when they made the rest of your head they allowed they couldn't spare you any more cavities."

"There's hopes for a hollow head but none for a solid one."

The girl's dress was so wet now that the lines of her pretty figure began to come into relief, and Red Monday, a gentleman at heart, was disturbed and embarrassed, and he kept his eyes off her.

He noticed that the surface of the water visible for several yards around the boat had the whirling, eddying, oily aspect of a strong tide in a narrow way, and he was secretly relieved. "At least," he thought, "we must be getting somewhere."

As a matter of fact, they were at that very moment being carried under Pelham Bridge by the rising tide, and not many minutes later they had passed under the railroad bridge and were drifting in the closest proximity to Mother Goose Island.

"Why, there's the shore!" exclaimed the Ryan girl, all other thoughts forgotten. At the same moment Red Monday perceived that the water was shallow enough for wading, and stepped out of the boat onto a

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submerged bank of mussels that crunched under his feet. And, wading gingerly, he dragged the boat ashore.

The Ryan girl leaped out and faced him.

"Just to let you know," she said, "that I hate you worse than anybody in this world, and I hope to Gawd I never see you again!"

And she ran off into the fog.

II

Having discovered that he was on a tiny island and that the Ryan girl, for all her heroics, could not be far off, Red Monday was vastly amused. He did not even take the trouble to look for her. Once or twice as he explored the limitations of the place he heard her teeth chattering, and that amused him so much that he actually improvised a song, words and music:

If I was cold as a cu-cum-ber
I'd jump and swing my arms
If I was cold as a cu-cum-ber
I'd jump and swing my arms.

Whether the Ryan girl took this advice or not is unknown. But it is known that, free at last from observation, she was weeping bitterly—because she was cold, because she was afraid, because it was getting dark, but, most of all, because she knew that the

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anticlimax to the haughty escape from Red Monday's vicinity not only made her look very cheap in his eyes but made her feel very cheap in her own.

Meanwhile, Red Monday was saying to himself: "Give her time and she'll come and eat out of my hand."

And, having discovered the remains of Mother Goose's little white cottage, he set himself to the task of making a fire. There remained of the house many broken boards of good white pine and many shingles worn paper-thin. There remained, also, naked to the winds of heaven, the old goose woman's fireplace and a few feet of its chimney.

Herein, with infinite precautions, for he had very few matches, Red Monday got a fire going. And here, later, warm and comfortable, he began to grow a little alarmed about the Ryan girl. It was really biting cold and wet anywhere away from the fire. She might have fallen and hurt herself; she might even die of exposure. And so he stood up and remarked in a voice loud enough to be heard over the entire island:

"Some people don't know enough to come in out of the rain."

There was no answer.

Then he thought:

"Maybe the little fool don't know I've got a fire going," and he said aloud:

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"Say, I got a nice fire."

Silence.

The silence frightened him. Much as he had learned to dislike the girl, he did not want anything serious to happen to her while under his protection. He had invited her (against his will) to go rowing with him, and he purposed to return her safe and sound to her family. And he began to look for her.

He would look for her for a while—growing more and more anxious—and he would look for his fire to see that it shouldn't go out. Sometimes he could see the pale glow of it clear across the island—sometimes not. And sometimes the glow he saw would turn out to be only a reflection of the real glow.

Whether the Ryan girl had found a secure hiding-place, or whether she was merely dodging him, he could not be sure. Sometimes he thought he could hear her moving about, stumbling over the rocks; sometimes he was sure he couldn't hear her and hadn't at any time heard her. Now and again he argued and expostulated.

"Don't be a fool!" "You'll get your death o' cold." "Come ahn in out of the wet." "I got a cracking fire for you." "I won't eat you," etc., etc.

And he became more and more worried. There must be something wrong, he thought. And the more he worried about her the less he hated her. The sting

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of her uncompromising repartees no longer smarted. Mean she might be, bad-tempered, and stuck up, and, indeed, all these things she doubtless was, but she was also a young girl wet to the skin and perishing of cold and anxiety. He returned to his fire and sat awhile in thought. Then he smiled, not gloatingly, because he was very anxious, but still with a certain satisfaction. And he said to himself: "If this don't fetch her, she's dead."

And he stood up and cried banteringly:

"You're afraid of me! You *dassent* show yourself!"

And she appeared upon the instant, like some watery spirit summoned by an enchanter's wand. Game to the last,

"What'll you bet I'm afraid of you," she stammered through her chattering teeth, "you p-p-p-poor little p-p-puppy?"

Red Monday said nothing. In her voice and in her look he detected incipient hysteria. She kept snuffling as if she had a cold in her head.

"I h-h-h-hate you. But I'm not afraid of you," she half-moaned.

Red Monday put more wood on the fire. The flames leaped.

"Get as close to it as you can," he said, "without setting fire to yourself."

Her body obeyed if not her spirit.

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And presently steam was rising from her clothes.

Now and then a sort of galvanic shudder went through her from head to foot.

Unperceived by the Ryan girl, Red Monday had taken off his jacket and was baking the lining; when this was hot to the touch he suddenly folded it about her quivering shoulders. The delicious warmth went all through her, and she burst into a storm of sobs. And Red Monday waited for them to pass, as, in time, pass they did. Then he left her and went down to the shore and was gone some time. He returned with an old tin can that was still water-tight and a handful of mussels. He cracked the mussel shells with his fingers and dropped the meats into the can, half full of salt water, and set it presently upon the fire to boil.

"It must be late night," said the Ryan girl.

"It is," said Red Monday. "There's a moon somewhere."

At that she whimpered.

"My father'll turn me into the streets," she said, "if I'm out all night."

Red Monday said nothing. He knew that, in their walks of life, explanations were not often listened to. If the Ryan girl had that kind of a father, why, she was in desperate trouble. There was no doubt about that. The thought made Red Monday more angry than uncomfortable. What right had anybody to suppose

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that *he*, Red Monday, wasn't decent and to be trusted? He'd show 'em!

They ate the boiled mussels and found them—eatable.

"Kid," said Red Monday, "I've got you into a mess. It's all my fault."

"Aw, shut up," she said. "You know it's nobody's fault."

"Now," he went on placidly, "you've got a good fire and enough sand not to be scared of being out alone. When this fog lifts and people find you, I won't be here. That'll clear *you*! You'll say the boat upset and you swam ashore, found the fire going and don't know what ever became of me."

"How'll you get away from here?"

"In the boat. I'll just push off in her and drift."

"You got some decency, after all," she said.

And somehow this made Red Monday's heart glow with a great warmth.

"Coming to see me off?"

"Are you going now?"

He nodded.

"You'll want your coat."

"I'll want it, but I won't have it."

"You take it or I'll throw it overboard."

"Ain't you and me fought enough?"

She rose and followed him across the island, and after a while they found the place where they had

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landed. The boat was gone. Red Monday had pulled it up onto the rocks, but the rising tide had pulled it off again.

"Well," said the Ryan girl, but not unkindly, "that settles that. Thank you for thinking of it, just the same."

"Oh," said he carelessly, "it don't matter about the boat. I'm no good in a boat, anyhow, but I'm some swimmer."

"We may be miles from any shore. I ain't going to have your blood on my hands."

"Wouldn't you," he said, "rather read in the papers that I'd been fished up drowned than to have your old man turn you into the streets?"

She weighed the question for a moment and then gave him a decisive "No."

"Well, I would," said he, "but thank you for saying you wouldn't. You got sand, all right."

"I won't let you swim in this fog."

"I ain't going to. I'm going to swim in the water."

And he laughed joyously.

And he stepped into the water and she screamed.

He turned back.

"What do *you* care?"

"If anything happens to you," she said, "I'll kill myself."

"Why? I'm nothing to you."

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"Any man that dies for a girl is something to her—enough to make her want to die, too."

Red Monday held out his hand.

"It almost looks as if we was going to part friends," he said.

She caught his hand and held it in both hers. The strength of her grip astonished him.

"We ain't going to part," she said. "Not this way, I mean."

"What way, then?"

"Oh, you know what I mean."

"I thought maybe you was going to give me a kiss for good luck. *Do!*"

She loosed his hand and burst into tears, and then she said:

"Why do you twist everything I say? And try to make yourself out mean and horrid when you're not."

And suddenly her old suspicion of him returned.

"Look here," she said, "are you really willing to swim off and take a chance of drowning just to save my reputation, or is it all bluff?"

"I *was* willing," said he angrily, "but you're so suspicious I'm beginning to think you're not worth it."

"Her good name," said the Ryan girl, "is all a working girl's got. Some of 'em lose it for love, some for vanity. But I'm not going to hang on to mine over a

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dead body. I *know* you're willing to risk your life for me, so—let's go back to the fire. Your life seems to be worth saving."

"Wait a minute," said Red Monday. "I don't want to risk myself overboard. But unless you're mighty sure you're willing to pay the price that maybe you'll be asked to pay——"

"I'm sure," she said.

"Well," said Red Monday, "that's good hearing. I take back all the sassy things I've said. You're a good kid, and you're a good-lookin' kid, and you've got good sand."

He drew a step closer, stood irresolute, exclaimed with a sudden wonderful intensity of feeling, "Oh, you kid!" and turned and ran into the deepening water, and was lost to view in the night and the fog.

The tide, high and swollen, was enjoying a short rest prior to running out. Having no idea in which direction to swim, Red Monday merely swam, and his right arm and leg being stronger than his left, as is usual, he swam not upon a straight line but on the circumference of a huge circle.

Owing to exposure, worry, the blacking of his eyes, and the bumping of his head, he began to tire much sooner than he expected, so that, at the end of half an hour, he accidentally swallowed a mouthful of water and got very nervous. He turned over on his back to

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rest, and progressed slowly, only paddling with his hands.

All of a sudden he saw a tremendous shower of big, golden disks and sank like a ship. He had run the top of his head into the perpendicular face of a rock.

Red Monday made a desperate fight for his life. He made a noise like a sperm-whale in a death flurry, and, just as he was drowning, somebody, attracted by the loud splashing, reached out a strong little hand and pulled him by the ear into shallow water.

Wet as he was, the Ryan girl put her arm around Red Monday's waist and helped him back to the fire, and his battered head lay against her shoulder, and with her free hand she held it there and pressed it close. Red Monday went into a genuine faint. Coming to, and realizing what a delicious fuss was being made over him, he went into a fictitious faint and stayed in it until he was quite sure of certain things that were going to bring into his life new color and richness.

And a breeze rose and blew the fog away, and stars shone and grew dim and vanished, and the dawn came.

"It won't be long before somebody sees us," said Red Monday mournfully.

She only squeezed his hand.

Still faint and sick, but very happy, he lay extended, his eyes, melting tender in their swollen and discolored sockets, looking up into hers.

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"Gawd!" he exclaimed with a sort of awe and wonder, "but you're a good looker!"

The Ryan girl blushed rosily.

"You're just the *sweetest* boy," she said.

Red Monday struggled to his knees and, bending low, kissed the face of the rock upon which they had been cast away.

"*Good* little island," he said.

III

Having thrown a hatchet at Red Monday and broken the kitchen clock, the Ryan girl's father showed willingness to listen to the young man's explanation. And the Ryan girl explained, too, until presently it was made to appear that opportunity is not sin and that a comparative stranger often holds a girl's good name in higher regard than her own father. And at last all the loud talk of turning the Ryan girl into the streets came to an end.

But it is difficult to let well enough alone, and that was why the Ryan girl tenderly shouted (she had to shout because her father was deaf):

"Not only *that*! But not once in all that time did he say one thing that a perfect gentleman wouldn't say to a lady!"

LEGAY PELHAM'S HEADACHE

LEGAY PELHAM'S HEADACHE

Legay Pelham had a headache. He sat on a bench in Central Park and tapped the asphalt at his feet with a crook-handled bamboo stick. He was seriously annoyed. It was his first headache, and he had had no pleasure for his pains. A musical comedy followed by losing more money at poker than you can afford to lose is never a pleasure. Never. He had tried several ways to rid himself of the dull pain between his eyes, and none of them had worked. He had tried, first, something that fizzed and tickled his nostrils. His man, Ashgrove, had mixed it for him, emptying white powder from a blue paper and gray powder from a yellow paper into a tumbler of water. Then he had tried the effects of eggs poached upon toast and spinach, an afternoon paper just out (it was then 11 A. M.), and a fancy-tale cigar, and these things had done him no good. Three violent games of racquets proved that a sweat was not what he needed, nor had two hours' loafing about the park in the hazy September sunshine made a well man of him.

"I didn't overeat," he mused; "I didn't drink anything but bubbly water. I've never had a headache

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before, and either it isn't at all fair or else I'm growing old, and am beginning to break up."

He was twenty-nine, a young man of admirable looks and address: if his face lacked expression and vivacity, it was not because he was stupid, but because he was calm. He never smiled until he really felt like smiling, but then the effect was most charming, and most disarming.

Men who had not the pleasure of Mr. Pelham's acquaintance considered him a haughty individual, largely because he moved slowly (unless there was some sense in hurrying, as at racquets) and carried his round blond head very high, like a Roman emperor. But when these men had been introduced to him, and had seen him smile, they went away with the agreeable feeling that they had been made much of, and always swore by him, even if they never had the pleasure of meeting with him again.

He might have been a great man if he had lived in an age when men did not seek offices, but had offices and responsibilities thrust upon them. "Things" came very easily to him, but he was essentially modest and retiring, so that if he had been running for governor of New York on the Republican ticket, he would without any question have cast his own personal vote for the Democratic candidate. For himself he had never asked anything of anybody. It was for this reason,

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some thought, that he had never married. "He not only says," said these, "that the best man isn't worthy of any girl, but believes it."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Pelham was not married because he had never fallen seriously in love.

The day had been hot. The asphalt testified with dents to the repeated tappings of Legay Pelham's cane. A squirrel came close to his feet, sat up, demanded nuts, scolded vehemently, and at a sudden sound of approaching steps, whisked into the nearest shrubbery.

"Must remember to bring nuts another time," mused Mr. Pelham, and looked up, with a very moderate interest, to see what sort of person was about to pass.

She didn't pass. She seated herself on the bench opposite, and began to play with a twenty-dollar gold piece.

The face in the shade of the great black hat was very lovely. A pair of fantastic earrings of old Spanish paste were fascinatingly becoming to her. Mr. Pelham's headache did not go away, but he forgot it. Hat, earrings, black dress, simple if a little traily, cut square in the neck, the full round column of the throat, the long round fingers, neither too much manicured nor too little, even the gold piece, satisfied his epicurean sense of what exactly, given the face, she ought to wear and possess to complete the picture. He looked

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at her feet. And liked them. But he did not think that black slippers with high red heels could be good to walk in. He watched her discreetly, and found himself wishing that he knew her, so that he could talk with her. He remembered his headache, and wondered if talking with a pretty girl was not good for headaches.

The girl did not so much as flatter Mr. Pelham with a single glance. She fooled with the coin, tossing it in the palm of her hand, or dropping it into her lap and forgetting about it for a moment or two. Sometimes she knitted her brows, and studied the toes of her slippers without seeing them—if you know what I mean. And once Mr. Pelham was distinctly aware that she had sighed.

He began to trouble about her. "I won't go till she does," he thought. "That is sure. But when she goes, I will have to stay, or go in the opposite direction. It wouldn't be proper to follow her. In fact, you may take it from me that to do almost anything you really want to do is seldom if ever proper. What's she up to now?"

She was balancing the gold piece on her thumb and forefinger. A well-executed snap, and it spun a dozen feet into the air.

Mr. Pelham clapped his hand to his mouth. He had been on the very verge of exclaiming, "Heads!"

In descending, the coin eluded its fair owner's out-

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stretched hand, fell to the asphalt, and, after rolling in a wide semicircle, made, with the impish purposefulness of inanimate things, straight for Mr. Pelham's feet. He caught it, and rose.

"So stupid of me," said the girl. "Thank you. But—did you notice which it was?"

"It was neither heads nor tails," said Mr. Pelham. "I caught it before it fell. If you were trying to arrive at some momentous decision, I apologize heartily. I will never do so again."

"When you've screwed your courage up to the sticking-point," said the girl, "it's rather disappointing to—to have the pistol miss fire, so to speak, or to find that the water into which you have suicidally jumped is only three feet deep."

"But—" and Mr. Legay Pelham smiled that charming disarming smile of his—"I hope the figures you use are much too tragic for the matter actually in hand."

"I wonder," said the girl.

"If you are in doubt," Mr. Pelham insisted, "the judicial mind of an outsider might perhaps——"

"Look here," said the girl, "this is most dreadful. I'm shocked at myself. When you returned the gold piece, a *lady* would have thanked you—and that would have been the end. You," she smiled, "would have gone back to your corner and continued to make dents in the people's pavement. But I—I ask you—which

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it was, and you say it was neither, and the first thing we know—and I'm sure we both look as if we ought to know better—we are on the point of beginning a regular conversation. It's really too bad of—both of us."

"It's done now," said Mr. Pelham, and again he smiled.

"I suppose so," sighed the girl, "so—so won't you sit down?"

He sat down by her with great calmness and pleasure. "You were just starting to tell me," he said, "about what it was that depended on the fall of the coin."

"Yes," she said critically, "but I am not sure. I *think* I was just starting to tell you—" she looked down shyly at the toes of her slippers, and laughed a short, throaty, delicious little laugh. It was as short and as perfect as one of Heine's very best songs. "And now," she said, "I *know* that I am starting to tell you. It's just this. I've got twenty dollars left out of two or three thousands. I came to New York—it doesn't matter where from—to go on the stage. I spent most of my money on appearances. It seemed the best guess, and then I found that going on the stage is harder than passing through the eye of a needle, or just as hard. The managers that have seen me haven't engaged me——"

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Mr. Pelham protested. "If I didn't have your word for it," he said, "I couldn't believe it."

"And the other managers," she went on, "won't—see me. Twenty dollars will take me home—home to an impoverished family, who have more sense of humor than I care to face at the moment. Martha is only nine, but even she will say that she told me so! My other alternative, Mr——"

She questioned frankly with great gray eyes. And he said, "Pelham."

"—Pelham, is a rich man who has no sense of humor at all. The coin which you caught before it fell was to have decided the delicate question which— It now remains to screw my courage up once more, and once more to toss."

"Not yet," said Mr. Pelham.

"Why not?"

"Is it possible," he asked, "that no fortune-teller has ever told you that your luck will change for the better the moment your path is crossed by a tall stranger with blond hair?"

"Oh!" she said, "don't tell me that you are a power in the theatrical world."

"Do I look it?" He was not offended. He asked rather for information.

"No," she said, "but—perhaps you know some manager who——"

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"Neither a manager *who*," said Mr. Pelham gravely, "nor a manager *which*. I am told that there are both kinds. But on the other hand I know a certain young woman who could play certain parts charmingly, and that is half the battle."

"But there are two halves to the battle."

"The other half," he said, "is congenital. I always get what I want. I don't quite know how or why. It just happens."

"How wonderful!" she said; "but don't you ever get things that you don't want?"

"Quite right," he admitted. "In fact, at this moment I am enjoying a slight headache."

"Oh!" she exclaimed with commiseration. "Where?"

"In my head," said Mr. Pelham with a slight twitching at one corner of his strong mouth.

"You might be little Martha," she pouted; "most certainly I shall not go home."

"Forgive me," said Mr. Pelham. "The ache, such as it is, is between my eyes."

"Thank you," said she, "I shall try to remember."

It was Mr. Pelham's turn to be discomfited, so he laughed joyously, and felt the better for it. "Have you," he asked, "any particular manager with whom you want an engagement?"

"Oh, yes," she said; "with Morrow and Grant. They are going to put 'Mrs. Wilding's Career' into

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rehearsal next week. I'm just dying to play *Ziff*—she's the girl, you know, who 'butts in.' I know I could play *Ziff*—she—she's *sweet*, Mr. Pelham."

"Then I am sure, too," he said gravely.

"They haven't engaged a *Ziff* yet," she went on hurriedly, "and I know every line of the part—and—oh, don't think I'm a conceited fool girl, Mr. Pelham—I *look* the part."

"As I remember the play," said Mr. Pelham, who had never seen it or read it or heard of it till now, "*Ziff* is a preternaturally pretty girl."

"The looks, though," she was still hurrying, "don't really matter. A girl can look anything she feels, but sometimes, rehearsing the lines in front of a looking-glass, and saying them the very best I know how, I—I *am Ziff*."

Mr. Pelham shook his head. "I will never admit that," he said; "you are most certainly not the kind of girl who butts in." And he continued for some moments to shake his head, and to say more to himself than to her, "No, indeed—not a bit of it—not that kind of a girl at all—believe me, no!—I assure you."

"Listen, Mr. Pelham. I think you are going to help me. You've a certain look of resourcefulness that raises my hopes very high. But, at the same time, I refuse to be helped under a misapprehension. I *am* the sort of girl who butts in. It's from pretending I'm

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Ziff so often, I suppose. But, anyway, I *can* butt in, and what is more I *have* butted in—at least once.”

Mr. Pelham shook his head. “You will have to show me,” he said.

“I will. Here sat I on this bench. There sat you on that. I looked at you.”

“I beg your pardon. I was *hoping* that you would, but as a matter of fact you didn’t.”

“I *did*. I looked at you twenty times, up and down. You didn’t know, of course. If I didn’t have some finesse I shouldn’t want to act. I looked you over, as I say, and I said to myself: ‘There’s a man who, if he didn’t belong to the idle rich class, could be a power in the world. If he was in earnest and looked straight at you (as you happened to be doing at the time), you’d simply have to give him anything he asked for—votes—money—offices—*anything*!’”

“Oh, come, now!” said Mr. Pelham, but he couldn’t help being a little pleased.

“And I said,” she went on, “‘If he’d only get interested in something, and move in it, do his very best in it, things would happen.’ And I said, ‘Oh, if he was only a friend of mine, and had set his heart on getting me an engagement—even *Ziff* in “Mrs. Wilding’s Career”—he would get it for me.’ So—it was life or death to me—I butted in. Do you think the coin affair was an accident?”

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"I do," he said loyally.

She laughed disdainfully. And once more spun the coin high into the air, and let it fall on the asphalt. As before, it curved, crossed the path, and came to grief among the dents made recently by Mr. Pelham's cane.

"Who taught you that trick?" he asked.

"My little sister Martha," she said.

"If your little sister Martha was a man," said Mr. Pelham, almost reproachfully, "I wouldn't play cards with him—for money."

He returned the coin to her, moving in his usual sedate calm.

"Were the alternatives accidents, too?" he asked, "the impecunious family with too much sense of humor, or the certain rich man with too little? Did you make *them* up?"

"No," she said, "both are real, and imminent."

"The life of an actor," said Mr. Pelham somewhat sententiously, "is a hard life at best, always jumping about, and getting up at the wrong time, and catching trains, and—" But he found that he did not know much about the life of an actor. "How about this rich man?" he asked abruptly. "Won't he do?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "he'll do. But, you see, I don't care two raps about him. And I think it's an awful mistake for a girl to marry a man she doesn't love. Don't you?"

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"I do," said Mr. Pelham. "I may say," he added with a certain vivacity, "that no matter how often a girl marries, she should *never* marry a man she doesn't love—never. I—I wish I knew you well enough to make you promise not to."

"Oh, I'll promise," she said, "if you'll promise never to marry a girl *you* don't love."

"Good God," said Mr. Pelham, "it isn't in the least necessary for me to promise that. The mere idea is revolting, abhorrent."

"About that coin," she said; "it wasn't entirely the wish to butt in, but, you see, it's the way that *Ziff* butts in in the play, only she doesn't drop a coin. She drops her grandmother's ball of worsted, and it rolls to the feet of the man."

"What man?"

"The man, of course, who is on the point of marrying the girl he doesn't love."

"I see. Then what happens?"

"Oh, he picks up the ball of worsted, and they get to talking, and he sits down beside her, and she tells him a hard-luck story, and he gets interested, and promises to help her, and does, and of course in the end——"

Mr. Pelham held up a warning hand. "You mustn't spoil the play for me, you know. Don't tell me how it ends. I am going to take in that show, and see if you

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are as good a *Ziff* as I think you are. It must be an excellent piece of work. As far as I can see, 'Mrs. Wilding's Career' is drawn directly from real life, or else real life is drawn directly from 'Mrs. Wilding's Career.'"

He rose in a calm, purposeful way, and held up his stick.

"Is that black magic?"

"No. I told you about my congenital gift of getting things. I want a taxi, or a hansom at the moment. There, you see, that man saw me. We'll have to cut across the grass to the road; they don't allow them on the paths. Do you mind?"

"Mind? No. I thought you were going to run away. But as long as you are going to take me with you, I don't think I mind anything. I feel sure that things are going to happen in the theatrical world."

"Look out for your head," he said, and held up the branch of a beech tree so that she could pass under.

"And where," he said, "do Morrow and Grant hang out?"

She clapped her hands. "Oh," she said, "you really are going to it, aren't you?" And she told him their address.

The taxi swept through the park. Mr. Pelham's face was humorously resolute.

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"But," she objected, "you haven't any appointment, and they're always so busy."

"Oh," he answered lightly, "you send in your card, and if people are in they see you."

"They don't see *me*."

"A manager," said Mr. Pelham, "is just like any other business man. There won't be any trouble. Just wait. And, by the way, you haven't mentioned salary."

"It isn't the salary I care about, Mr. Pelham; it's the chance."

"That," he said, "isn't like you. You haven't given me any reason to think you're a foolish girl. I think"—this gravely—"that a hundred dollars a week sounds like a salary. What do you think?"

"Good Lord," she said; "I'll be lucky if I get twenty-five."

The doorkeeper, the Cerberus, the guardian angel of the firm of Morrow and Grant, was an immense Irishman with a somewhat ominous face, and at least the incipients of a repellent glare. He sat behind a flat-topped gate in a little office no bigger than a sentry-box. At one side of the sentry-box a turnstile gate, of which Cerberus had control, opposed itself to any sudden advance upon the office of Messrs. Morrow and Grant.

Mr. Pelham presented himself at the flat-topped

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gate, and laid his card upon it. "Mr. Morrow," he said pleasantly, "or Mr. Grant."

Cerberus looked Mr. Pelham over, not impertinently, but studiously, as people in fairy-stories examine mysterious strangers for signs of a cloven hoof, and was impressed, at once, with the gilded youth's clothes and way of wearing them, and with his impassive Roman-emperor face.

Cerberus then consulted a dirty little pad on which names and times were written in pencil. "Don't find any appointment under Pelham," he said.

"The card—the card," said Mr. Pelham, "you have the card."

Cerberus turned it over a couple of times. "What is the nature of your business?"

"*That*," said Mr. Pelham, "is what I came to discuss with the heads of your firm. I'd like to tell you about it, and some day perhaps, when I am at liberty, I may do so; but at the moment there are only two people in the secret."

He turned to the girl, who stood a little to one side, and smiled encouragingly. Then he smiled upon Cerberus. And Cerberus was flattered, he did not know why, and smiled back. He took the receiver from his telephone, and presently spoke into the mouthpiece. But for some reason he *didn't* say, "A gent calling himself Leggy Pellum thinks you might like to see

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him." He said instead: "Mr. (Mumble mumble) is here. Will I send him in now?"

The answer must have been favorable, for the turnstile clicked invitingly, and Mr. Pelham stood aside for the girl to pass through.

"Seventh door on the right," directed Cerberus. "Mr. Morrow."

There was a pleasant crinkling of something green, and Mr. Pelham followed the girl through the stile.

They came presently to a Chippendale chair with a piece of raw-edged brocade thrown over one arm. There were other "properties" in the corridor: a suit of tin armor, a gilded column of *papier-mâché*, an imitation of a copy of a Stuart Washington.

"This," said Mr. Pelham, "is a very becoming chair. I think you had better wait here."

She sank into the chair, and because Mr. Pelham saw that she was nervous and excited he smiled at her, and almost patted her shoulder.

The seventh door on the right was open. But Mr. Pelham passed through two offices and a corridor before he arrived at Mr. Morrow's sanctum, which, as Mr. Pelham noted, contained some of the most luxurious chairs he had ever seen, and practically all the autographed photographs in the world.

In the greatest and easiest of all the chairs lolled the great Mr. Morrow, the back of his head resting upon

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his fingers, his feet upon a writing-table of Circassian walnut. He was gazing upward into a pall of recently blown cigar-smoke, with that expression upon his broad heavy face which little children have when they sit down before the fire to look for pictures in the coals.

After an interval the great man rolled his head, perceived Mr. Pelham, and jumped to his feet as if he had received a shock. He thrust both hands through his hair, and stood it on end.

"My God," he said, "it's wonderful! I was expecting a man about four feet high, and I look up— I was down at Coney Island the other night. I had my fortune told. The woman said my luck would change for the better when a giant of a man with blond hair—a stranger—crossed my path. I don't know you, do I? Have a cigar?"

"No, you don't," said Mr. Pelham gravely. "Thank you, I will. The woman who told your fortune had the right of it. Your luck *is* going to take a change for the better."

Both the men were big and powerful, but there was a stateliness and high breeding about Mr. Pelham which the manager lacked. Both, however, had eyes of a matter-of-fact, logical quality, and it was rather curious to hear them speak with such casual good faith of a fortune-teller's stock prophecy. They sat down, Mr.

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Morrow in the writing-table chair, Mr. Pelham in the next easiest.

"I envy you these chairs," said Mr. Pelham. "But if your luck is to take a turn for the better, shall we go to it?"

"If you please," said Mr. Morrow.

Mr. Pelham smiled, and Mr. Morrow was charmed, and, if he had any weapons left, disarmed.

"*Have* you," asked Mr. Pelham abruptly, "found any one to play *Ziff*?"

Mr. Morrow shook his head. "There hasn't been a girl clever enough to raise her head above mediocrity in ten years," he said, "and only two men."

"Well," said Mr. Pelham, just as if he had been Mr. Morrow's partner, "I haven't found anybody to play *Ziff*, either. But"—again he smiled, very calmly and sweetly—"I have found *Ziff* herself."

"*Ziff* herself?"

"She is the prettiest girl I ever saw," said Mr. Pelham, "and the cleverest."

"Who is she?—what has she ever played?"

"That isn't the point," said Mr. Pelham; "the point is that your luck is to change through the unexpected crossing of your path by a tall blond man. Something tells me that I am he. And, what is more important, that *she* is *Ziff*."

"But can she act?"

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"Could *Ziff* act? I ask *you*."

"Yes," Mr. Morrow admitted, "*Ziff* could act. That is why it has been so devilish hard to cast her."

"Rehearsals," Mr. Pelham announced, "begin next week."

"Mr. Grant and myself are in despair. When can I see this girl?"

"Oh," said Mr. Pelham, "you must take my word for her first. I am telling you," he explained, "that she is perfection for the part. It hardly seems necessary for you to see her, until we have arranged details."

"I didn't get your name?" said Mr. Morrow.

"I am Legay Pelham."

Mr. Morrow brightened visibly. "I might have guessed it," he said. "I was trying to make up my mind that you were some new and wonderful type of con-man, but—I—I couldn't. Glad to meet you, Mr. Pelham."

They shook hands.

"And of course," continued Mr. Morrow, "I take your word for this lady's looks. You're a better judge of what a girl of *Ziff's* class ought to look like than I am. But—you'll pardon me for a little caution—how do you know that she can act?"

"Mr. Morrow," said Mr. Pelham, "I will meet you half-way. I *don't* know. I don't know. But—" He

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rose, and his face shone with sudden enthusiasm. "To look at she is exquisite. Every movement she makes is graceful and sure. She has that sort of voice which is most excellent in a woman. A man has only to see her to be her champion. Half the people in an audience are men, aren't they? And there is a something pathetic about her, so that even the women will go home saying how beautiful she is. Can she act? I *don't* know. But she can—appear. She can speak in her natural voice, she moves like an angel, and when she laughs you laugh. Believe me, sir, I know something of magnetism. She has it. As for acting, is there—between you and me—*any one* who can act—any one on the stage to-day?"

Mr. Morrow thought for some moments, and then, with a certain genuine reverence, mentioned five names, two of which Mr. Pelham had never heard before.

Once more Mr. Pelham seated himself. "About salary," he said. "You must pay her just what you would pay some one who was well known. Mustn't you?"

"Why?" asked Mr. Morrow bluntly.

"So that she will always be your friend," said Mr. Pelham. "It wouldn't do to have her make a great hit, and then throw you over for some other manager because you had been reticent about money. Would that do? I ask you."

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"No, it wouldn't be good business."

"Then, if she *is* a hit, it doesn't matter what you pay her, does it? Or if the play fails—you are out so much money anyway that a little more shouldn't weigh with you."

Mr. Pelham laid down the law with an unruffled calm, but when it came to actually naming a sum of money he felt very uncomfortable inside. He had heard actors' salaries talked about, but had no reason to know if such talk had been truthful or not.

"She's hard up," he said. "If she doesn't get a chance she will have to return to an impecunious and narrow home life, all her little pipe-dreams over. But you—with your power to work big magic—have a chance yourself to play a charming part, that of fairy prince. With one word you can lift a good and beautiful girl out of all her troubles and anxieties and make her in one moment as happy as the day is long, and your friend for life, and," he added ingenuously, "mine. You are going to do this—aren't you?—if— if only to strengthen your own heart, your own hold on the very best things in life."

Mr. Morrow, his mind suddenly resolved, nodded curtly.

"Suppose," said Mr. Pelham, "we say two hundred dollars a week?" He trembled inwardly.

"If I decide to cast her for *Ziff*," said Mr. Morrow,

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"she shall have two hundred a week. But in fairness to me, I've got to have a little more to go on."

"You'll give her a chance?"

"You bet!" said Mr. Morrow.

"Please wait," said Mr. Pelham.

He went out with a little more than his usual haste, and brought her back with him.

At the mere sight of her Mr. Morrow brightened wonderfully.

"Have *you*," he said, "been tramping the streets of New York looking for work?"

"Yes," she said, "I have."

"Damn!" said Mr. Morrow. "Fools! Pigheads! . . . Mr. Pelham," he smiled roguishly, "has engaged you to play *Ziff* in 'Mrs. Wilding's Career,' if we find you're up to it. Are you?"

She considered for a moment. And then, with a grave little nod of her charming head, "Yes," she said, "there isn't any doubt. Sometimes I *am* *Ziff*, you know."

"Do you know the lines?"

She nodded.

"Will you read a speech or so—for us?"

"Oh, with pleasure," she said, and she turned quietly to Mr. Pelham, and spoke very quickly and touchingly that speech of *Ziff's* in the third act, beginning: "Even if I *told* you all that you've done for me, you'd just

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smile and tell me to forget it. There isn't another heart in this world like yours, nor another understanding."

When she had finished, Mr. Morrow snuffed twice, and Mr. Pelham was pale and troubled. She looked away from him after a time, and turned to Mr. Morrow, the lovely head perched a little on one side.

"You see for yourself," she said gently, "that sometimes I *am Ziff*."

Mr. Morrow cleared his throat, and affected a brusque gayety which, owing to a little piece of acting (was it acting?) which had touched him, he was far from feeling. "Mr. Pelham," he said, "it was two hundred and fifty dollars a week we mentioned, wasn't it?"

The two big men eyed each other without smiling.

"Yes," Mr. Pelham said gravely, after a moment, "Mr. Fairy Prince, it was."

Mr. Pelham and the girl entered their waiting taxi.

"If you'd just drop me at my boarding-house," she said and told him the number. But Mr. Pelham did not at once give the number to the driver. Instead he told him to drive through the park slowly, and this was because the girl, without a sound or word of warning, had suddenly burst into tears.

Mr. Pelham was dreadfully touched. He said all the soothing things he could think of, but nerves have

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no ears. You can't argue with them. She just kept on crying.

But all good things come to an end—even tears of happiness. She stopped crying, and said how ashamed she was, and how happy, and how grateful. They gave the number of her boarding-house to the driver. They lighted the little electric bulb in the taxi, and the girl straightened her hat and ordered her hair at the little mirror.

"My place is in the next block," she said, "but please turn out the light. I'm a sight."

Mr. Pelham protested, but turned out the light.

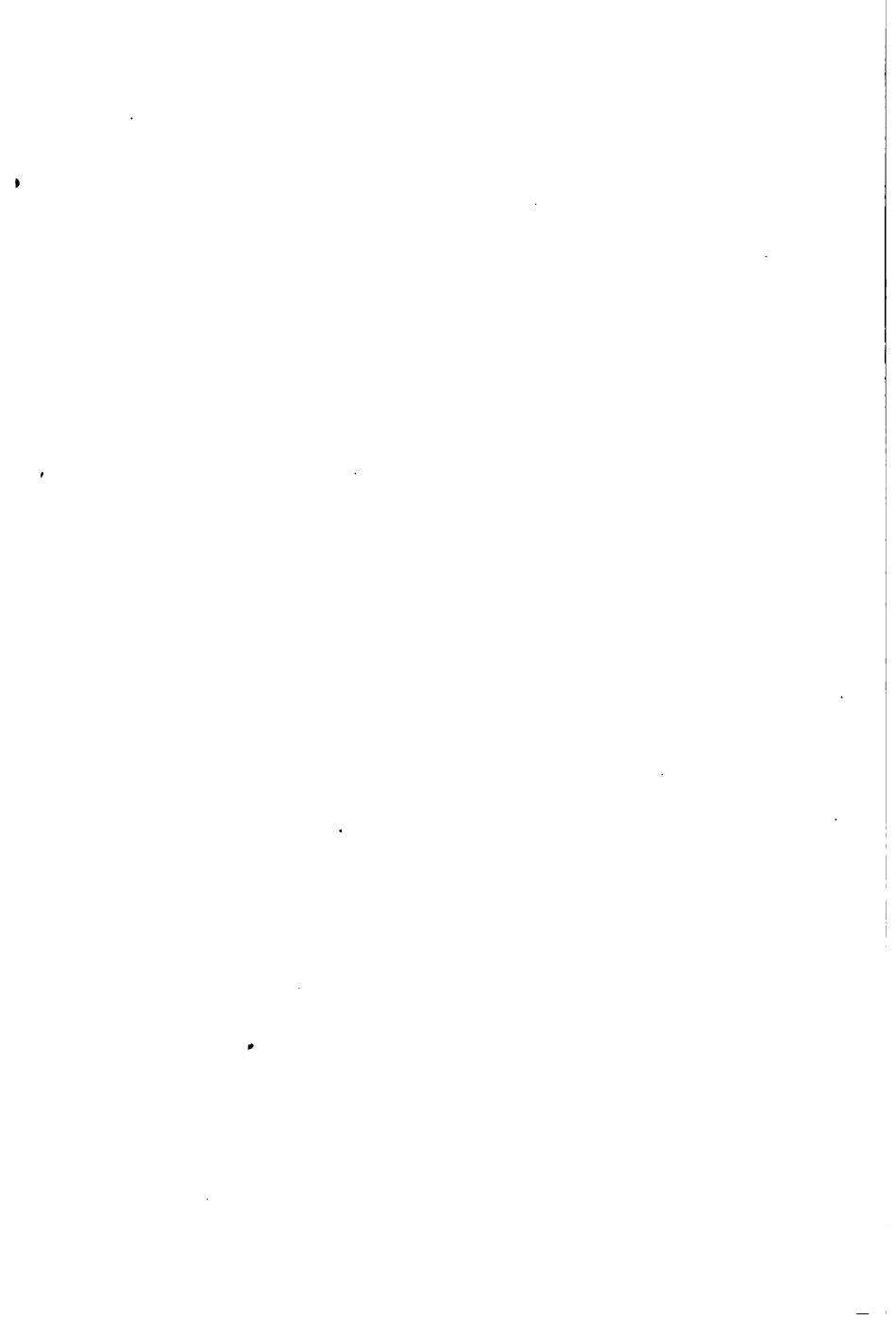
"In the play," said the girl, speaking as one who is firmly resolved, but who finds the saying of certain things difficult, "the last thing—the man who has been so good to poor little *Ziff*—she—she kisses him—just a—sisterly kiss on the forehead."

Mr. Pelham took off his hat and closed his eyes.

He drove then to the Rest House, where some of his friends had threatened to dine. And these asked him how his "poor old head was," and he thanked them, and said that it was quite well.

"I had to give up the whole day to the search," he said, "but at the last moment I found a perfectly sure cure for a headache."

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Mr. Honeywell Sears, of Ipswich, was a very superior person. He had a superior income, a superior set of nerves, a superior farm two miles square, and he came of a superior family. He was also a cultivated person. He was good at music and farming, at history and polo, at investing and entertaining, at orchids and tennis, at obtaining justice and dispensing it. He knew the price of everything, and the value of many things. He was not a big man physically, but he was well knit and strong as a bull-terrier. Moreover, unlike the average superior and cultivated person, he was almost offensively courageous. He had thirty-two sound teeth in his head, very white and glistening, and when he played games or looked at landscapes out of train windows he wore a pair of shiny, thick-lensed eye-glasses.

It was a wonder to Bostonians that Prudence Adams of North Adams wouldn't marry him. He was known to favor twenty-six as the correct marrying age for men, and when he had passed that milestone in his own life without changing his state of single unblestness, it was taken for granted that he had asked her to marry

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him and been refused. He had—twenty-six times—with a dogged energy and zeal, and in language that might have done credit to Noah Webster sober or Daniel drunk. But he refused to accept even the twenty-sixth refusal as final.

“There are persons, Prue,” he explained, “who regard a constantly reiterated (and rebutted) expression of the gentle passion as savoring of a gross and unmanly persistence. To such critics I should feel at liberty to answer that my inclination to you represented by the unknown quantity or quality x has by recapitulation merely been raised to the twenty-sixth power, and is further susceptible of being foisted to the n th. And, in passing, if there is any particular reason or set of reasons, personal or qualificative, of the flesh, the spirit, or the environment, which appears in your eyes to be an obstacle between the ultimate conjunction of our respective lives and interests, I should write myself your debtor if you would put a name upon the fact or the illusion.”

Prudence Adams couldn't talk his language. But to gather the gist of his meaning was possible.

“Billy,” she said, “I like you better than any man I know. But there is an obstacle between us. If I loved you instead of only liked—very, very much, it would still be insur—unsur—oh, unmountoverable—you know what I mean. I'm just a stupid, empty-headed girl,

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and you're the most superior person in the world. There!"

Mr. Honeywell (*alias* Billy) Sears flashed into American.

"Is that all that's troubling you?" he said.

She shook her head.

"Not quite, Billy. When the novelty of possessing the girl you think you care about had worn off, you would put her in her proper place—somewhere way off and way down. It's impertinent for me to criticise you, but honestly, Billy, you treat most people—especially your social inferiors—as if they were dogs."

"And so they are, Prue," said he; "most of them. If you are referring to that particular and painful incident in New York, I must explain to you that the driver of our taxicab whom I called a cheat and a liar *was* a cheat and a liar. And if such qualities in another inspire me with a feeling of contempt mingled with white-hot hatred, it only proves that in matters of integrity I *am* actually that man's superior, and you will recall that in the upshot of the unpleasant episode referred to, I also proved myself the fellow's superior in a more tangible manner."

"I *know*," she said. "He couldn't *touch* you. And you nearly knocked *his* head off."

"I have made it a principle of my life," said Sears meekly, "that when a cheating, lying, drunken, under-

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bred ruffian uses the expression, 'I want you to understand, young feller, that I'm just as good a gentleman as you are,' I punch him."

"But you shouldn't look so cold and cruel when you hit people, Billy."

"But it's the feeling cold and cruel that causes me to hit," he explained. "Don't you know, Prue, that a great War of Class is being fought daily and hourly in this unhappy country? Don't you know that your class and my class, superiority, breeding, manners, common sense, and understanding of the beautiful are being pushed to the wall? And don't you know that I am only trying to do my duty as a private in this war? An enemy shows himself and I strike."

"And if your wife showed herself an enemy of so much superiority, and she might, you know, you wouldn't strike, I'm sure, but you'd say such cold, bitter things, and you'd feel so cold and hateful that she'd just die."

"I think, Prue," he persisted, "that you would find me a just man."

"But I'm only a fool girl," she said. "I know I should receive justice as your wife. And I just couldn't stand that. I should want, not justice, but indulgence."

"Wait! Just what do you understand by the term *indulgence*?"

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"Well, for instance, if I told you that a dress had cost one hundred dollars and you found out that it had cost two, I should want you to laugh and kiss me and call me a Silly Billy."

Mr. Honeywell (*alias* Billy) Sears swallowed hard.

"And if I promised, whenever your judgment ran contrary to mine, that I would laugh and kiss you, and call you a Silly Billy?"

"It would be because you had promised, Billy."

He put on his eye-glasses, thus indicating that his twenty-sixth proposal and refusal were now history, like the Battle of Lexington and the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers. At the door he turned.

"Prue," he said, "I think I have gathered your meaning. In the future I shall try to—*think* kinder."

Somehow this speech touched her, and when he had gone she drew a very long sigh and looked teary. And then she picked up a registered letter from the desk and carried it humbly to her father. It was a bill for a last-spring hat which she had been forbidden to buy. No wonder the poor child had had about enough of justice in this world, and had set her aspirations upon indulgence.

Society was determined upon the match. It was like a conscientious person with a duty to perform; determined to perform that duty before engaging whole-

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heartedly in frivolous pleasures. They were continually placed next to each other at table; groups of which they happened to be a part were always melting away like sugar in hot tea, and leaving them conspicuously together. Parties were organized for their benefit—moonlight on snow, cosey corners, and vacant conservatories were deliberately put in their way. Other men who fancied themselves in love with Miss Adams were ridden over roughshod, pried off, snubbed, inveigled, bribed, flattered, and cast aside.

Backed by his class and inspired by a great, if exteriorly formal and precise, love, Billy Sears was determined to win. A superior man, he conducted his campaign in a superior way. Since she was not open to direct bribes (much as she would like to have been), he bribed her in the abstract. It became rumored, and then confirmed, that he had engaged the celebrated New York firm of McSlim, Tweed & Wright to build him a house. It was to be fitted into a grove of fourteen white oaks (*Quercus alba* he called them), the least of which was seven feet in diameter. These stood upon a gentle rise of ground, and for a thousand years had looked south upon the deepest and most picturesque lake in New England.

Society knew that Billy was building the house for Prue. But she said, "He's building it solely and entirely to display his collection of woods. The ballroom

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floor is to be planks of Domingo mahogany, two inches thick, and there's to be a little sitting-room up-stairs all Circassian walnut; not wretched veneers, mind you, but thick slathers of it, sold by the ounce, and the library is to be black walnut that's been seasoning in the Sears family for thirty-eight years, and the hand-rail of the stairs—I forget its name—but it's the heart of the only tree of its kind that was ever found in the Bahamas. No, he isn't building a house for me or any one else. He's building a museum for his old woods, that's all."

Nevertheless she allowed herself to be consulted about the "museum" and the gardens and the park; she went all over the Arboretum with him, chaperoned by the man who has introduced more species to cultivation than any other man, and helped him to decide what he would plant and what he wouldn't.

That excursion brought her closer to Sears than any other one thing had ever done.

"My dear," she said to her best friend, "don't misjudge him. We went all over the Arboretum in fact or on paper all the way from *Abama Americana* to *Zyg-Zygophyllaceæ Tribulus Terrestris*. And Billy didn't make a single solitary statement. He asked questions, only. And he pretended that he didn't know the Latin name of anything. Though going out and coming back, when there was nobody to check him, he was

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almost cruelly technical." She laughed reminiscently. "He was proposing to plant a group of *Liriodendron Tulipefera*. I said I didn't like carpet bedding. He said, 'But they aren't *tulips*, you know!' I said, 'Well if they aren't tulips, *what* are they?' He looked at me and he said, and he never cracked a smile; he said: 'They are a magnificent tree 20-65 metres high, with diverging curved branches. Leaves glabrous, very broadly ovate or nearly orbicular in outline, truncate, rounded or cordate at the base, 0.7-1.5 decimetres long, with two apical and 2-4 basal lobes, with rounded sinuses; flowers about 5 centimetres high, erect; greenish-yellow, orange-colored within; petals obovate, obtuse, about equalling the sepals; cone of fruit dry, oblong, acute, 7-8 centimetres long. In woods, Vermont and Rhode Island to Florida, Michigan, and Arkansas, May-June.' That's exactly what he said. I laughed till I cried, and offended him. And then, to make up, I got him to teach it to me. Knowledge is a great thing. I now know, thanks to Billy, *exactly* what one kind of a tree is *like*—but I wouldn't recognize it if I saw it. But he didn't talk that way at the Arboretum, I can tell you. I have never seen him so gentle and human. He joked about his ignorance. And he said he liked lilacs and dogwoods—never once said *conifer* or even *deciduous*. He's sending to Veitch for ten thousand lilacs, sixty-two different kinds. He says he wants a 'patch' of color to the east."

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It was about his new house that Billy Sears went south that winter. He had heard of a warehouse in Charleston, S. C., that was built entirely of teak. It was to be torn down and he wanted the teak. His going had nothing to do with the fact that Prue Adams was also going. He so told her, firmly, but regretfully. And he never lied.

She was going with friends from New York via Charleston to Yemassee, in the rice country. She was to travel alone to New York, and join them in their car at the Pennsylvania Station at six-forty-five.

They met quite by accident at the Back Bay Station and took adjoining seats in the Pullman.

"Dear me," thought Billy, "it looks for all the world like an elopement." And he was almost as shocked as if it had been. Prue was also shocked. She was going South partly for the fun of it, partly because she loved riding, and partly to make up her mind about Billy, peacefully and free from the determined bias of his partisans. And, lo, and behold! here he was face to face with her, and he had already been very sharp to the porter, and to a drummer who had stumbled over his foot, and how could she make up her mind about him under such circumstances, with any show of justice to either of them?

He was at his worst when he travelled. The moment he had crossed the Massachusetts State line he became

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suspicious-minded, and nervously on the alert for anything derogatory to his comfort, his purse, or his dignity. The inhabitants of Connecticut he despised, root, trunk, and branch. As for New York, he admitted to friends there, but they were only exceptions to prove one of his rules. And most of them had been chastened by direct association with Massachusetts. Either they had passed through Harvard or they hadn't; either they had been entertained on the North Shore or they owned stock in one of Boston's most exclusive copper companies.

To add to his general dislike of New Yorkers he now learned that the name of Miss Adams's hosts was quite unknown to him. It was almost a German name; and he was quite sure, without being told, that they weren't anybody. And so he said, "And *who* are the Arburgs?"

"Oh," she said, "they're just a jolly couple, with a couple of jolly children, and a couple of millions recently made in Wall Street. But they were just as nice when they had only one jolly child, and no jolly millions, and Betty made her own clothes."

"And jolly well, too, I suppose!" said Billy, but not sneeringly. He was prepared to like Betty. He did not know why. Perhaps her name smacked of the Bay State. But he resented his incipient inclination to like a total stranger. And he disciplined himself for having entertained it.

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"You certainly have a wide circle of friends, Prue," he said.

"Yes," she admitted, "but some of them individually are so narrow that the average remains circumspect."

That was quite a phrase for Prue. And Billy, passing over the insult to himself, was pleased with her.

"New London," she announced; "scene of the great boat race; only a few choice seats left." She leaned suddenly forward. "Billy, did you ever go to a boat race and have to sleep on a billiard-table at the old Pequot House?"

He blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Yes, Prue. I did sleep on a billiard-table. But I didn't have to. I had in my trousers pocket a large brass key admitting me to a moderately clean room and bath, but when it became time to retire I was unable to find it."

"You had been——?"

"I had. Most immoderately."

"One thing I like about you, Billy. You may not spare other people, but you certainly don't spare yourself."

"I try to be just," said he, "to every one."

Her eyes twinkled.

"You shared the billiard-table with your *best friend*?"

"How do you know?"

"He told me."

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"He was a Yale man," said Sears bitterly. "As I was unable to pronounce or remember his name at the time, I vaguely recall insisting, in order not to hurt his feelings, that he was my best friend."

"Well, his name was Arburg—Johnny Arburg."

"Your host?"

"And so you see you *do* know them, and you'll come into their car, won't you, and talk over old times?"

"*Before* you and Mrs. Arburg? I fancy not."

They were mending a road that ran through a swamp. They didn't do it because they liked to do it, or because they were paid to do it, but because they had to do it. They were sixteen men, entitled, according to our glorious doctrines, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In short, in spite of their black, beastly faces, in spite of their horizontally striped suits, in spite of the irons that linked them loosely two and two, they were not our inferiors, but our equals. And two men with pasty white faces, slouchy black hats, and Winchester rifles, were present to see that they behaved as such, *i. e.*, that they worked like the very devil.

In that they worked and didn't want to they were our equals. A man who, through his gorilla passions, has been put to breaking stones upon a public road is the equal of the man who breaks stones in order to

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support his family. In this, too, they were equal to all other men: that now they laughed and joked at their work, and now were swept by waves of gloom, depression, and discouragement.

Careless little peccadilloes of omission and commission were the cause of the sixteen wearing chains and striped suits.

Number one had set fire to a little grocery store which had refused to extend his credit. Number sixteen had murdered his grandmother for a package of Bull Durham tobacco, which the venerable old lady had in turn filched from a friend. Numbers three to fourteen, inclusive, had broken the seventh commandment. Number two was in bondage for having purloined a cured ham from Number fifteen, and Number fifteen was in bondage for having separated the same ham from a rich widow to whom it rightfully belonged.

Long habit had inured the white guards to the possibility of danger. They did just as much guarding as was necessary to earn a living and no more. If the weather was warm and pleasant they took turns at sleeping. If it was cold and rainy they took turns at a brown bottle. Their hands and mouths were stained with tobacco juice. Their rifles were red with rust. In summer they talked about women and politics; in winter about politics and women.

In all its long and rather noble history the State of

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South Carolina had never seen a sweeter day. The sky was baby-blue; the air was warm and dry. The gloomy swamp on each side of the road was brightly lighted with torches of flaming yellow jasmine. A mocking-bird perched on the top of a cedar was singing love-songs, and until the shadows crossed the road the mosquitoes rested from their labors.

In the course of their enforced duties convicts one and two, linked right leg and left, pickaxed their way to a part of the road damp with tobacco juice, to a part of the road, in other words, just clear of the outstretched legs of their somewhat bored and somnolent guards. Number one was singing softly to himself. Number two looked rather white for a negro. Number one nudged him with his elbow. Number two showed his teeth. And then Numbers one and two executed a manoeuvre which they had practised in secret. They wheeled sharply to the left, leaped forward without being tripped by the iron which linked them, and brought down their pickaxes with terrific violence upon the heads of their somnolent and unsuspecting guards.

A chattering as of excited apes rose in the stillness, and sank and rose again. Eyes gleamed and teeth flashed. The dead white men, smelling so exhilaratingly, so maddeningly of blood, were kicked and trampled. It was getting dark. To-morrow, perhaps, there would be lynchings, hangings, and burnings.

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Meanwhile there was a whole night in which to live, to be free and to pursue happiness. There arose presently the horrid steady creaking of many files cutting furiously into iron.

Two by two as they had come, but no longer manacled, no longer guarded, they marched up the road from that place; sixteen beasts filled to the brim with fear, with murder, and with ungovernable passions.

They walked at a great pace, and sometimes broke into a run, for, while the swamps hemmed the road, there was no turning to the right or left. The road must carry the ill-omened covey to plantation lands before it could scatter over the countryside to its wild business of eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you will be lynched.

Billy Sears remained in the South longer than he had intended, returning to Charleston, after ten days in Aiken, to complete his arrangements about the teak warehouse. In St. Michael's churchyard, quite by accident, he found Prue and the Arburgs reading the inscriptions on the tombstones, and trying to charm lizards by whistling the newest turkey trot to them.

Having received hospitalities in their car, on the way down, Sears wished to return those hospitalities. And he drew a long breath, filled it with invitations, and let it out. It was a complete guide to Charleston,

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the Magnolia Gardens, etc., with pleasant suggestions of luncheons and dinners at the right times and places.

Betty Arburg accepted all his invitations at once, explaining, however, her eyes twinkling, that it was only because of his lifelong friendship with her husband. The party returned to the hotel and, while Sears and Arburg retreated somewhere or other to further cement and solidify their famous friendship, the ladies walked in the vast gallery from which the secession of South Carolina was tossed as a crown of glory to the gay and warlike people in the street below.

Times had changed, or the hour. Save for one old negro, who appeared to walk in his sleep, Meeting Street was empty. The ladies might have been on a hilltop in the country as far as solitude and seclusion went, instead of in the heart of a city. The opportunity for an intimate conversation was eagerly seized by both.

"You *do* see what I mean about him, don't you?"

"Of course. But underneath he's just like other men—kind and impulsive. Remember the billiard-table. My dear, if you *do* like him a lot, let it go at that and keep thinking about the things he can give you. Devotion, houses, automobiles, yachts, private cars, hats, French underclothes, and all the silk stockings^a you ever dreamed about. Was his mother happily

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married? His grandmother? Yes. Well, believe me, *he* will never depart from family precedent."

"I think *all* that—*often*," said Miss Adams. "And just when I've primed myself to accept him he will spoil it all by abusing some poor waiter or cab-driver, or that poor negro, for instance, who begged of us on the way in. If he did it angrily I could stand it. But he's so calm and cold and cutting and hateful—like a guillotine."

She sighed.

"Oh, dear!" she said, "life is very complicated."

"On the contrary, it's very simple. A poor harassed father who actually does take your head off every three minutes, and a rich prospective husband—who might. Of course if you don't *love* him!"

"But I'm very, very fond of him. And I wish he wasn't building such a wonderful house. Only *think* of the parties I could give!"

"There's my good man sticking his head out of our parlor window—hallo, there! Yes, we're coming! He's trying to look as if he hadn't just sneaked a cocktail."

Later in the afternoon Billy took them all for a long drive in a hired motor.

It had four pneumatic tires. When the god Apollo was getting ready to drive his chariot up over the rim of the world for the first time, these tires were offered

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to him by an officious friend, and refused on account of their age.

Sixteen miles from Charleston (coming back) the first tire gave up the ghost. Six minutes later the second blew out with a report like that of a pistol.

The young people stood about in the road while the chauffeur made his preparations for repairing the damage. Either he was not a good mechanic or his tools were not good. Mosquitoes came out of the swamp to help him. It is not easy to repair a tire with one hand and to kill mosquitoes with the other. The chauffeur became patiently and gently profane.

The young people became bored after a time.

They thought progress upon the tire unnecessarily slow. Billy Sears even addressed a few cold and cutting remarks to the chauffeur, now bathed in perspiration, and perhaps a few tears, for he had just barked the same set of knuckles for the third time.

Just then Arburg called attention to a column of convicts approaching through the dusk like some horrid striped worm.

Betty and Prue expressed the opinion that the convict system was horrid; Arburg that it was excellent.

Billy Sears wiped his thick eye-glasses and put them on. And then his heart gave a shocking leap in his breast. He slipped his arm through Arburg's and

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drew him a little way up the road toward the advancing column.

"Laugh," he said. "I am supposed to be telling you a funny story. No guards with those men; leg irons been cut; Mrs. Arburg—Prue." Then, once more master of himself, he issued not suggestions but orders in a distant, icy voice; turned Arburg around and strolled back to the car. They both appeared to be laughing. While Billy Sears gave the ladies a complete and concise description of the convict system in South Carolina, Arburg bent over the chauffeur and whispered in his ear:

"Have you got a gun?"

"No, suh."

"Because there's a bunch of escaped convicts coming along the road."

"Lord Gawd Almighty!"

The youth's hand closed firmly upon the handle of his mechanic's hammer. He gave one look at Mrs. Arburg and Miss Adams, then loosed his hold of the hammer in order to spit upon and rub dirt into the palm of his fighting hand. Arburg took a large clasp knife out of his pocket and opened the big blade.

Meanwhile the convicts had spied the women, and an ugly laugh went suddenly up from Number three.

Billy Sears walked slowly and icily forward, wiping and readjusting his eye-glasses. When the head of the

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column was within ten feet of him he began to speak, and it halted as if it had been stung or, better, frozen; the rear ranks closed up, and the striped men massed as if to listen to a chosen leader.

The tones of his voice and occasionally his words came back to his companions. Prue sighed. For, as the Ancient Mariner, with his glittering eye, held the Wedding Guest, so Billy, with his glittering voice, held the convicts. It was as if they had suddenly been exposed to a temperature of 100° below zero.

"I need hardly remind you, my men," said the Bostonian, "that the doctrine of sixteen to one was exploded with crushing finality at a recent Presidential election. Perceiving that you are fresh from murder and sudden death, I conceive it to be my duty to inform you that if, when I have counted twenty-five in a judicious and slowly spaced sequence, you have not disappeared from the face of this road, I shall step aside and give an order which will blow you from it in one awful discharge. As there are ladies in my party I consider your presence here objectionable and in execrable taste, and I do not propose at this time to listen to the causes which, inducing you to raise your hands against your properly appointed guards and custodians, added murder to the doubtless sufficiently criminal category of crimes for which you had already been incarcerated. The swamps on either hand of this road

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will afford you a temporary asylum from the rifles of the avenging posse which I shall presently find myself under the necessity of putting on your trail, and from the savage jaws and wolfish temper of its accompanying bloodhounds. I shall now, beginning with the first cardinal, proceed neither slowly nor with undue velocity to the twenty-fifth. Thus does the law, as represented in my person, afford you the merciful opportunity of preserving yet a while longer your miserable carcasses intact."

Without pausing, and still with the awful and icy precision which had marked the whole of his astonishing discourse, Billy Sears began to count.

But as he counted, the effect of complete bewilderment which his long words and phrases had had upon the anthropoid minds of the convicts passed. And a great fear rose in Billy Sears's breast; but still he fired the cold cardinals in their black faces—twelve—thirteen——

Number thirteen, feeling perhaps that he had been personally called upon, stepped forward, rubbing the palms of his hands together.

"He ain't got no gun," he said. "Bust him open!"

But at that moment in the neighborhood of the car there sounded a loud and screaming-sharp report. In the abrupt silence that followed, Billy Sears only emphasized the iciness of his voice.

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"At the next movement which any one of you makes in any but a retrograde direction, my friend, Major-General Arburg, three times winner of the trophy for rapid and deadly firing at the Olympic games, will shoot to kill—fourteen—fifteen——"

The convicts crowded together, began to jabber, fell apart, and, a sudden panic seizing them, scattered and plunged into the swamp in this direction and that. For a long time could be heard the cracklings and splashings of their frenzied goings.

That night when Billy Sears had retired the Arburgs asked Prue what made her look so glum and blue.

"Oh! it's Billy," she said. "Why couldn't he have spoken nicely to those poor wretches? I can't get the cruel tones of his voice out of my ears. It wasn't his business, anyway. They hadn't done *him* any harm."

"Prue," said Arburg, "now that it's all over, I think you ought to know that if it hadn't been for Billy Sears, you and Betty and I might not be alive to talk about him."

"Do you mean to say we were in *danger*?"

"I mean to say that I had my knife out and that I was prepared, if necessary, to kill Betty and you to save you from worse. That's how much danger we were in."

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"Then——"

"Yes, Billy Sears saved us. But of course it is your privilege to find fault with his exact manner of doing it, down to the least shading of his voice."

"Oh!" she cried, "but he didn't save us. It was you. It was after you punctured that tire, and made a noise like a pistol that they ran away."

"Yes. And Billy Sears ordered me to puncture that tire when he had counted to the number thirteen. *Ordered* me, I tell you, and in just the same cold and insolent and cutting voice that he turned loose afterward on those damned dogs. And I tell you *I just love him for it.*"

"So do I," snapped Betty.

And Prue, a little bewildered and almost in tears, turned from one to the other.

"And you would, too," said Betty, not kindly at all; "if you had any sense, you'd just love him, too. Talk about cruelty!"

The next day Prue, who had thought about the matter all night, had her chance. It was in a cold and lofty hotel parlor, to be sure, not very romantic or anything, but she did her best. He said, "Good morning, Prue. I hope you have enjoyed a sound night's rest."

"I haven't slept a wink, Billy."

"That is most distressing news, Prue. Has anything

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occurred to affect the ordinary course of your usual good health and nerve?"

"Yes, Billy. I just *love you*. That's all that's wrong with me."

The Bostonian's face brightened. If she expected something in the nature of a chill, she was agreeably disappointed. His eyes glistened as if with tears, his voice broke with tenderness, he caught first her hands in his hands, then all of her in his arms, and then, real tears in his eyes now, and his hair beginning to rumple, he said:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

To Mr. Legay Pelham the great city of New York was very empty. It was not because Miss Allardyce had left it, but because she had intimated that in Newport, where she was going, he would be neither more nor less welcome to her than other young men of his engaging class.

"I am not *hard*," she said, "but you and your friends are drifting. I like you very much indeed, Legay, but you shouldn't ask me to take you seriously; especially as I have work to do."

"You mean," he answered, "that until you fall in love with somebody you are more interested in abstract principles than in men. Well, I'm sure I don't blame you. But it's very disappointing. Believe *me*. Very."

"Even if I should fall in love," she said, in that decided way so disturbing to inexperienced lovers, "I should never, until some of the main principles of life have been settled, feel that I had time to attend to the details."

"I am afraid," he said, "that when you get your vote you will find that you will have to give up all the

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privileges which you now enjoy. That would be only fair."

"Privileges?" Her eyebrows went up.

"Why, yes—the right after being disgracefully divorced to receive alimony from a man poorer than yourself."

"What else?"

"Well, if a man is attacked by six ruffians, other men stand around until he has had his licking. I know this by experience. But if violence, or even rudeness, is offered to a woman, a dozen champions spring to her defence, not even stopping to ask if she is in the right or in the wrong. Take it from me: the girls have the best of it. Everybody tries to give them a good time. But wait till you get mixed up in politics, where there is neither honor, nor decency, nor love of country—only treachery and greed. Wait until somebody tricks you into taking a bribe and the newspapers get hold of it. You just wait till you're President and see what a mess you won't be able to help making of everything. Believe me, once change the tea-gown for the toga and it's all up with a woman!"

Her answer was as feminine as it was crushing. "If you were to change any one of the hundred suits in which I see you disporting yourself for a toga, it would be a good thing. And I dare say I shall cast a vote before you do."

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"Oh," he said, "*I* vote, invariably if not hopefully. Sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, and much good it does me or the country. And so you commit yourself to the main principles of politics, and are never going to find time for the mere details of love, courtship, and marriage. What a pity!"

"It isn't a pity."

"It is. Because you are beautiful and, if the notion took you, you could be everything that a girl ought to be. If you talk very cool and proud it's not because you are different from other women; it's just because, not being in love, you can't imagine being in love. I wish you would fall in love with me. But you don't. Well, I hope you'll fall in love with somebody else. Anything to—to make a woman of you."

So she went away, and because he thought he loved her the city seemed empty to him; and to his friends who still lingered into the early summer *he* seemed empty. "Gay's up against it," said one. "Yes, up against that d. f. of an Allardyce girl. Never knew him so hard hit before. Read about the suffragettes tearing up all the golf-links in Great Britain and throwin' acid on the puttin'-greens? Kind of impresses one with their latent powers for improvin' legislation, doesn't it? Thanks. I've just had one."

"Somewhere in this world," thought Legay Pelham, "there must be the right girl for me."

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

This proves that his feeling for Miss Allardyce was rather part of a general inclination to marry and be cared for than of a hopeless passion for Miss Allardyce herself.

"Yes," he said to himself, "you may take it from me: somewhere there's the right girl. And if she doesn't actually exist ready to hand——"

He broke short off, and for the first time in three days smiled. Then he went on.

"Wonder I never thought of *her* before. Could have her educated, taught how to dress, taught how to talk, given good times. Believe *me*! Then if she didn't reach the blue-ribbon class, she'd take a red or a yellow, anyhow. And—and leaving me out of the running—me and all question of me—it wouldn't be a bad sort of experiment to try——"

His thoughts were interrupted by Johnny Tombs. "Gay," said Johnny, "what's the matter with the women, anyhow?"

"Matter? They aren't brought up right. And most of 'em aren't dressed right. I'm thinking of starting a girl's school. I mean a school for a girl."

"Tell me more. First, the girl's name."

Legay Pelham shuddered. "She will first," he said, "be untaught the name which she cannot now be said to enjoy. Then she will be taught a new name, and a new voice with which to say it."

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

"What are you driving at, anyhow?"

"Something that I don't want talked about. Something that I wouldn't have mentioned to any one but you. I've looked a lot of young women over critically, young women of our class, and I find 'em wanting. I'm going to pick one from a very different class and bring her up."

"Personally?"

"Good God, no! Impersonally. I know a man who went through the South buyin' up likely street-car and dray horses. Three months later he took enough blue ribbons at the Garden to fill a waste-paper basket."

"And a very proper receptacle for blue ribbons."

"Everything's in the schoolin'."

"Tell me more."

"I will when I know more."

"There'll have to be a duenna."

"Yes."

"Got one?"

"Yes. And if there was any part of this country where I wasn't known by sight, I'd be duenna and teacher and everything myself. It's a respectable proposition. The Lord knows that; but I don't suppose he'll make it his business so to inform my friends or even the police, and so there will have to be a duenna."

"How young is she?"

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

"About sixteen."

"Pretty?"

"I tell you I'm picking her to be schooled for the blue-ribbon class. She's the prettiest girl I ever saw. She is also the most ungrammared, and her voice will have to be taken apart and put together again."

An hour later Mr. Pelham, very tall, very dignified, spoke across a glove-counter to a young girl of whom he had once bought a pair of gloves. He smiled as upon a child, which she was, and she recognized in him not a masher, not a mere man even, but a certain demigod whom she had seen but once and whom she would always remember. It had been her instinct in the first place, was now, and always would be—to please him.

"If I ask you some very impertinent questions, will you answer them?"

"Sure," she said, "I don't mind."

He shuddered a little in his æsthetic nerves. "Are your parents living?"

"No, sir."

"Have you a guardian?"

"I live with two other girls, if that's what you mean."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Do you want to vote?"

"I don't mind."

"I mean is that the *one* thing you want?"

LEGAY PELHAM'S PROTÉGÉE

“Gawd!” she said.

Again Legay Pelham suffered. “Would you like to get married sometime when you grow up, and have a house, and people to take care of you, and automobiles, and things?”

“Would I? You bet! Got anybody in mind?”

“Well, not exactly—not just yet. I think you’d have to be older before one thought very seriously about anybody for you. If I told you that I had only your best interests in mind, and wanted to try being a sort of older brother to you, would you believe me?”

She looked him straight in the eyes for a little while and said, “Yes.”

“You’d trust me?”

She nodded and said, “What’s the hunch?”

“The idea? I don’t want to start by making you conceited, but I see great possibility in you—great possibility of looks and heart. I think they are being wasted. I’d like to give you a chance to show the world what you could be like if you had that chance. My dear child, I’m not making up to you. As you are now I’m a little sorry for you. I want to be glad for you, and of you. That’s all.”

“That’s quite some order!”

“Oh, no. To-day is Saturday. When the store closes tell your employer that you are not coming back.

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And tell your friends that you live with that you are going to live with a Mrs. Shepley."

"Look here," she said, "if I spring that on them, they'll give me the grand haw-haw."

"I think not," he said, "because Mrs. Shepley will come for you in a taxi-cab, and after she has spoken two words they will know that you are to be in kind hands, and in good hands. Everybody knows a gentlewoman, when they have the infinitely rare privilege of seeing one. But you'll come?"

"Yes, I'll come."

"But why? You don't know me. You have only my word for myself."

She laid a little hand, white and well-shaped, if a little boyish, on her breast, and she said, "In this here trust company your word's as good as E. T. Gerry's bond."

Legay Pelham was deeply touched. "But why?" he said.

"Oh," she said, "it's easy when you've looked hundreds of men in the face. But I don't know *why* you're doing this. And it don't matter. If you say so it's all right. Any more questions?"

"Why, no—not just now."

"Isn't that just the image of you!" she exclaimed. "Why don't you ask me if I have the right to be taken up out of the near-gutter and given a chance?"

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Legay Pelham flushed pink to the roots of his smooth, blond hair.

"It's all right," she said; "I'm straight."

The young man was very much embarrassed. "Mrs. Shepley will call for you to-night," he said, "at a quarter to nine. Will you be ready then?"

"Sure. I haven't but twenty trunks to pack."

"Unless you're particularly fond of some of your things," he said, "don't bring them. You see, you're starting a new life, and what is charming behind a glove-counter may be out of place in a limousine."

"I guess there's nothing much that I've got that I'm fond of. I come as I am?"

"Please!"

"Will you be there?"

"Often."

He smiled and went, and either the shades of night were closing down, or with his going the shop actually grew darker.

She had often dreamed of a sort of Fairy Prince. Then she had seen Legay Pelham—once. After that she had often dreamed about him. Now he had gone away. And the store was dark. She thought she had been dreaming again.

"Say," she called to a friend at another counter, "what was that gent's name that just went out?"

And she trembled. She feared that the answer

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might be: "What gent? I didn't see none." But the answer was reassuring: "That was Mr. Legay Pelham. He's the biggest swell in the bunch. Gee, but I'd be ashamed not to know *him* by sight."

"But I do—*now*."

"My dear Gay," said Mrs. Shepley, "she is the most wondrous and precocious child. I think she has forgotten all the evil and hardship she ever knew." She looked him gayly in the face. "And so, my dear boy, have I. You have reincarnated us both. But she's in a blue funk at the thought of seeing you. She realizes what a tough little thing she used to be, and she's terribly afraid you won't think she's improved fast enough, that you'll be disappointed."

But Legay Pelham was not disappointed. On the contrary, he was bewitched. She came. Mrs. Shepley went. Mr. Pelham took a step forward.

"Oh!" she said, "you promised to come often. And you did at first, and now it's six whole months. And I think you have no use for me any more."

He thought he had never listened to a prettier voice. He knew that he had never seen so pretty a girl. And for once in his life he felt ill at ease.

"Please say I've improved," she said. "I chose this dress myself. Is it all right?"

"You *know* it is."

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Then he pulled himself together, and asked her many questions, some of them very subtle. And all the while she looked him in the eyes with a complete and troubling worship, and gave answers that pleased him to the soul.

"And we are going to Santa Barbara for the winter," she said. "And I've gotten to be a distant cousin of Mrs. Shepley's, and next summer she's to take me to Newport, and I'm to come out. And I'm frightened and happy. But you—what ought I say to you? You made it all so possible and so easy out of your great heart. I'd like to tell you that, no matter what happens, I'd die for you any time you said the word. That's that. I wanted you to know. Now we needn't talk about it, because it makes me want to cry."

"A blue-ribbon winner. You may take it from me. Nothing less. I know what I'm talking about."

It was thus that Mr. Pelham invariably spoke when deeply moved.

"I've got all my things spread out in rows in the next room," she said. "Cousin Barbara says that they're all right, but I won't be satisfied till you've said so, too."

Of what was exquisite or of what was fitting there had been no better judge than Mr. Pelham since the days of Petronius. He reviewed her "things" in silence. Then he said, pointing, "That lavender is raw."

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"Yes. What else?"

He smiled. "Nothing else."

"Oh!" she said, "Mrs. Shepley chose the lavender. And everything else I chose myself."

"Pride," said Mr. Pelham, "cometh before a fall. If Mrs. Shepley chose that color to go with your eyes, it must have been in an ill-lighted shop on a dark day."

They returned to the little sitting-room.

"The thing that worries me," she said, "is the awful expense I must have been to you."

"Do you mind taking money from me?"

"If I make good I sha'n't mind. Because that was the idea, wasn't it?"

"You have made good. That is—are you a suffragette?"

"If a girl with money and friends and health and nothing much on her conscience is discontented because she isn't allowed to vote, she's a—oh, there's something I haven't learned!"

"What's that?"

"I don't know what I ought to say, when I want to say what I was going to say."

"And what was that?"

"I was going to say that such a girl is a fool."

Mr. Pelham didn't smile. He grinned. "If," he said, "you had studied English under Addison, Steven-

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son, and Dr. Browne for a thousand years you couldn't have hit upon a more excellent qualification of the species you describe. There are," he went on, "thousands and thousands of sensible women in this world. There are hundreds that are just as efficient as men. None of *them* want to be like men. And all the others do. Directly a woman wants to be like a man, she loses that certain something which has made her man's better angel since time immemorial. The movement for suffrage amuses men, and saddens them. They will grant the suffrage. But equality? No. Believe *me!* Man will never grant them that. He will always give them a little the best of everything. When he marries and she won't have children because she is 'too useful in other spheres,' he will forgive her, and be gentle as he always has been, and live out his life childless. When, in spite of the vote he gives her, she continues to ruin him with her extravagances, he will, as usual, and silently, work himself to death a little sooner. And when she runs off with the other man, he will allow himself to be put in an evil light, so that she may get her divorce and her alimony and the sympathy of the newspapers. Man will never treat her as his equal. Believe *me!* He will always give her a little the best of it. But if I am wrong—if man ever does treat her as his equal, if he ever drags her down from the high pedestal on which he has placed her, do you

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know what would happen?" He smiled a little grimly for him.

"No. What would happen?"

"It would be a sound," he said; "it would sound as if something wonderful had taken place, and as if half the inhabitants of the world were clapping their hands in applause, and the other half were crying bloody murder."

He was still a little sore at Miss Allardyce.

The next day he took Johnny Tombs to call upon his protégée, and this one came away professing to be in love with her, and at the same time demanding to have explained to him why she was more attractive than other girls of his acquaintance. After reflection Mr. Pelham said:

"It's because she knows that she is having a good time at the time she is having it. She takes you off your feet with her power of applied and concentrated joyousness. Most girls of her class—her present class—take the pleasant things of life too much for granted, and are actually or affect to be bored by them. There is no disease so contagious as boredom. Look at Miss Allardyce." He spoke very calmly. "Nothing was ever quite good enough for her. And she doesn't even get any fun out of her politics. Now, my protégée—*she* knows what's what! She's got the things and the opportunities that ought to make girls happy, and she

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just surrenders with a big smile and lets 'em make her happy. If I am any judge she will take Newport by storm."

"Suppose," suggested Mr. Tombs, "that some man wanted to marry her. Wouldn't there have to be a good many explanations?"

"Not explanations. Just one statement of fact. Her origin is all in her favor. To have risen to what she is from what she was, is her one proof positive of extraordinary character and ability. And, besides, I am very fond of her, and she won't be penniless by any means."

Tombs expressed his admiration of a man who could give large sums of money to an unrelated girl without starting a scandal. But Mr. Pelham only smiled shyly. In all his life he had never intended harm to any one, and this was so patent in his face of a young Roman emperor that not even a total stranger had ever been known to question his motives. He had yet to start a scandal; he had stopped a thousand.

"Shall you run out to California to see how she is getting on?"

"I was going to invite you to come, too."

They went. And they taught her to swim in sight of the snow-topped mountains and to look comfortable on a quiet pony, and to play tennis a little, and, with Mrs. Shepley for a fourth, at bridge. And the party

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drifted up to Monterey in the spring, and regretted that they and all their friends hadn't been born and brought up there, so that they might now go on living there forever. And Mrs. Shepley grew younger, and the lines between her eyebrows vanished.

And if Mr. Pelham thought of Miss Allardyce, it was naturalistically, as a botanist thinks of a cactus. And they saw the rough along the fair green of the golf-course burst into millions and trillions of flowers, and the roses in the Del Monte gardens. And Mr. Pelham brought people from San Mateo and Burlingame and San Francisco to meet his protégée. And she became so joyous and sweet that sometimes Mr. Pelham couldn't sleep at night for wondering what he ought to do about it.

To the most casual observer it was obvious that she worshipped Mr. Pelham. Most people dislike their benefactors, secretly, but she was made of tenderer and more grateful clay. And sometimes it troubled him to be looked at the way she looked at him. For she couldn't look at him even across a bridge-table when he had laid down a poor dummy for her to play, without telling him, plain as words, that he had but to ask her and she would die for him. He grew fonder and fonder of her, and prouder and prouder; so fond, finally, and so proud, that he packed up his things and returned with Johnny Tombs to New York. And

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though absent she was continually in his mind for seven days. And this was his best record.

Mrs. Shepley rented a little cottage in old Newport, and early in the season launched her adopted cousin upon the gayeties of the place. The older people were delighted to see Mrs. Shepley back in Newport, for she had cut several swathes there in her day, one as a penniless girl of great charm and beauty, one as the most enterprising hostess in America, and a third as a most pitied widow of a suicide and failure.

Mr. Pelham kept away till the middle of August. He wished his protégée to meet other men upon a basis unhampered by her gratitude to him. He thought he was in love with her. He had thought so ever since California. Another record. And like a good sportsman, he intended to give up the inside track which he had enjoyed so long, and to draw lots for places with the others.

She was on the beach at Bailey's, passing a tennis ball with young Mr. Blythe, of Boston, and the Earl of Gresham. Mr. Pelham seated himself on the sands beside Mrs. Shepley and said quietly, "It's the smartest bathing-dress on the beach; did you choose it?"

"No," said Mrs. Shepley; "she did."

And they laughed and shook hands, for they had not seen each other for many weeks. Presently Mr. Pelham's observant eyes caused him to say:

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"She thinks Blythe is funny, and she likes Gresham *quite a good deal*."

Mrs. Shepley looked vaguely out over the blue, tumbling Atlantic and murmured, "Nonsense."

And then there arose in Mr. Pelham's breast a feeling for which that spacious, tender, honest place had never had room before. He was so ashamed, so mortified, that he could have cried. It was horrible, a catastrophe, that a heart to whose soundness and cleanliness he had all his life given closer attention than the most fastidious woman to her teeth, should now, without warning, fill to the brim with jealousy, ugly and bitter.

His face of a young Roman emperor became very white. He strained the power of a will to the breaking-point; he brought up his reserves at the gallop, generosity and belief in himself. And it was as if he had taken his heart in his hands, turned it upside down, and spilled the bile into the sand of oblivion.

"I love Gresham," he said; "always did. He's the best young Englishman they've produced in fifty years. Ever tell you how he and I travelled through southwest France with a circus van, and prevented Viscount Fife from marrying the snake-charmer? He's a V. C., you know, and could write half the alphabet after his name. And he's good as gold and full of mischief."

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As he praised the man of whom he had been jealous, Mr. Pelham felt better, and when she came up from the beach and suddenly saw him and gave him that "always ready to die for you" look, sweetness returned to him in full measure, and he smiled like an angel.

She went in to dress, and either the sun went behind a cloud or it actually became darker out of doors.

"Do they ask questions?" said Mr. Pelham.

"They meet her," said Mrs. Shepley, "and that is their answer to every possible question. She has made a great hit."

"Why?"

"Because she knows that she is having a good time when she is having it. Other girls are always looking forward or backward."

Mr. Pelham chuckled. He was sufficiently human to enjoy the proving of his theories.

One day he called, but she was out, and so was Mrs. Shepley. So he went into their little parlor to wait, and he picked up the morning paper and took it to a sunny corner and began to read. The first and last item to catch his attention was thus captioned:

"Miss Allardyce quietly married to Congressman U. P. Upshaw."

And then the article explained not without humor how Cupid had brought together a young woman foremost in the ranks of female suffrage, and a man, no

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longer young, who had been foremost, both as a humorist, serious orator, and politician, in the ranks of its opponents. "Miss Allardyce when questioned by our special representative intimated that politics was an excellent vocation for idle women with nothing better to give their minds to. As for her, she conceived it to be woman's highest duty to make a home for the man she loved——"

Mr. Pelham was so staggered at first that he couldn't laugh. Tears of laughter came before the laugh itself. And that never did come.

It seemed to him not as if he suddenly heard voices in the hall, but as if he had heard them for some time. And then before he could disclose himself, he had heard too much. He *had* to sit still and listen. It was her voice, very sorrowful and beautiful: that voice which he had had taken apart and put together again.

"My darling," she said, "all the world to me and heaven beyond, I can't, I won't, because I think it would hurt *him*. Whatever I am he made me; whatever I have he gave me; whatever he wants of mine, or me, has just got to be his, or there's no justice in the world. I will break your heart if I must, and mine, but that's nothing. That heart, his heart, God help me, I won't break."

"But," it was the Earl of Gresham's voice, "perhaps he doesn't care that way. Has he said so?"

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"Oh, no, if he had I should be engaged to him by now, or married to him. He didn't care, but he does now. It's in his eyes when he looks at me. Oh, please, please forgive me for doing what's right, and—and now go away, please; because there's hard times before you and me, and I've got to go up-stairs and cry before I can face them."

Silence.

Then the Earl of Gresham's feet going out into the street, hers going up-stairs, and then from the room above—heart-broken sobbing. Three minutes later Mr. Pelham made his escape.

The next day he called upon her by appointment, and found her alone. And she was prepared to face death for him—or heart-break, and it was written in her eyes.

As for Mr. Pelham, a solid, perhaps a little too solid, flesh-and-blood young man, he looked for once in his life as if he did not quite belong to this earth. He looked less the young Roman emperor than a noble and militant churchman to whom, in moments of wrestling with the flesh, have been vouchsafed visions.

"Will you marry me, dear," he said, "and come to live in my house?"

It was not in vain that Miss Nobody of Nowhere had been taken from behind a glove-counter and schooled in Mr. Pelham's school. Had he felt it his

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duty to marry a girl who loved him, but whom he did not love, he would not have gone about the matter in a long-faced and half-hearted way. He would have play-acted. He would have made love to that girl with all his might and main. And so likewise she.

"Oh, yes," she said valiantly, "because I love you with all my heart and soul."

And she put her arms about him and buried her face against his shoulder. Then a strange thing happened. Mr. Pelham laughed softly, and said, though his voice broke a little:

"You little goat! You *are* grateful, aren't you?" Then he got excited and said, "What did I tell you?—not a bit of a skate; a blue-ribbon winner: you may take it from me!"

She drew back from him, filled with wonder.

"Now," said he, "you stay put. Understand? You stay here. I'll make a dash for the reading-room and send Gresham round. Poor fellow, he's eating his heart out. So were you—but you're not now! Are you? Say you're *not*—you little darling!"

There was only humor in his face now, and goodness. For in some way known to great gentlemen with strong wills, he had managed to draw a veil between his soul and his eyes which were always its windows.

But for answer she put her arms around him again and hid her face again, and cried so sweetly and hap-

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pily that it was a pleasure to hear. And Mr. Pelham's soul began to look out of its windows, until suddenly it saw itself in a looking-glass, and was frightened, and once more hid itself behind a veil. And he said:

"A blue ribbon or not? Yes. What? Take it from me."

And presently he walked out into the street with his stick swinging and his head of a Roman emperor carried very high, and, if I may say so, that great cup his heart held upside down so that on the off chance of anything bitter leaking into it it would at once spill out.

Across her wedding-dress she wore from waist to shoulder a broad blue ribbon held in place by diamond stars. And when she came close to where the Earl of Gresham and his best man stood, she gave the latter a look which said:

"Even now if you say the word, I will stop getting married, and die for you. But please, please, dear heart, I'm having such a happy time."

Her bridal bouquet of blue corn-flowers (to match her eyes and her ribbons) and lilies of the valley (to match her white and fragrant soul) shook in her hands as if it had the palsy. But Mr. Pelham only smiled with good humor and goodness, and when the groom dropped the ring on the floor and it rolled solemnly

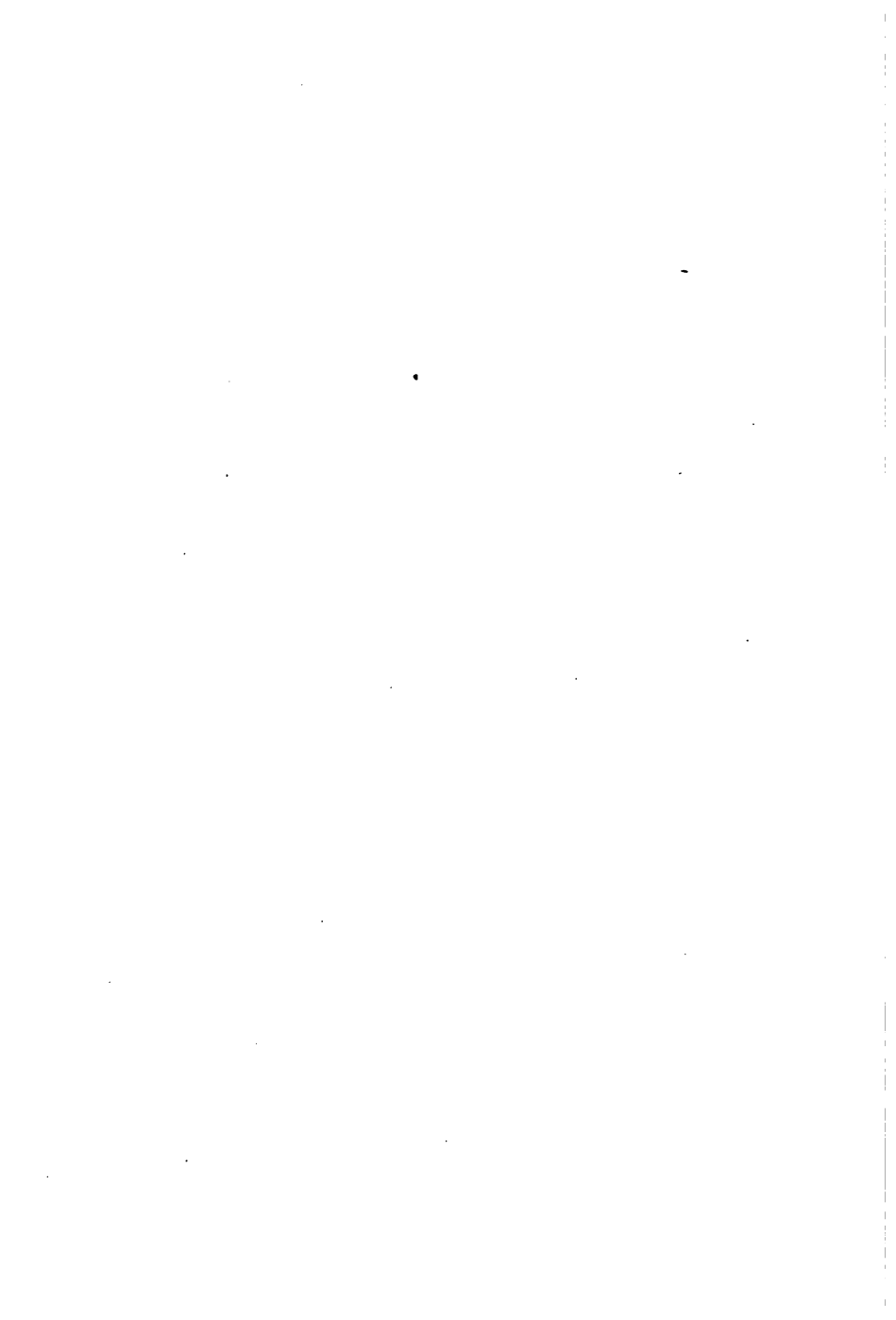
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away under the Bishop of Rhode Island's petticoats, *there* was Mr. Pelham with a spare ring coming out of his waistcoat pocket (and oh, how that waistcoat did fit!), and later at the breakfast there was Mr. Pelham to make everybody laugh, and to see that all the old ladies had a good time, and later when the rice began to fall on the roof and windows of the beribboned and be-slippered automobile in which the happy pair were to slip inconspicuously away, *there* was Mr. Pelham with a most wonderful smile on his face.

For he had turned his heart right side up again by way of experiment, and so far nothing bitter had seeped into it, and better, the radiance of the bride's lovely face seemed now to assure him that nothing ever, ever would.

But that night it was noticed that he drank five cocktails before dinner, and it was well known that his habit was one, and his limit two.

THE BACK SEAT



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I

She had always taken the back seat. That she must some day divide somewhere between twenty and fifty millions with her brilliant and beautiful brother did not matter. She had always taken—she would always take—the back seat.

It just happened so. A shy baby, she would be a shy grandmother. She was a nice, honest girl, but she wasn't attractive, and she hadn't the art to make up for this by pushing herself forward and being important and self-assertive. Physically she was sound enough, but not well-proportioned, and, as to her face, plain. Even the most hardened and gallant newspaper could never have begun an article about her with such words as: "Pretty sixteen-year-old Fanny Ludlow——"

She was far from pretty. She was short and stocky. Her neck was not long enough. Her hair was just hair. Her teeth were strong and sound, but not white. She had a decided inclination to freckle and yielded to it. She was near-sighted and wore thick lenses over her

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eyes. If she had been a shop-girl earning six dollars a week nobody would ever have tempted her to retire into guilty splendor.

The American woman of fancy and of fact is a lovely creature. The exceptions to this rule are sufficient to prove it. Fanny Ludlow was one of these exceptions. But she was so rich potentially that she had to be considered. She had to be cringed to, kowtowed to, sought in friendship, sought in marriage.

It is commonly supposed that money makes all the difference between a rich girl and a poor girl; but this is not so, because there are so very, very many ways of being rich. And Fanny was rich in only the one.

Show dogs, show houses, French underclothes, French outerclothes, hats, wraps, and the like, pearls and diamonds, English sporting clothes, rare books, boots and shoes that were works of art, servants to fetch and carry for her, gardens—all these things she had galore, added to more money than she knew how to spend. But one gleam of those qualities that cause a young man to long for the privilege of drinking champagne out of some young woman's slipper she did not have.

And so she was poor.

But she had plenty of common sense. She saw herself precisely as others saw her—saw that she was honest and generous; saw that she was thick-set and stocky and unattractive; and saw after a while, with

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a pang like the plunging into her heart of a red-hot poker, that she was never going to be loved for herself alone.

One night—she was seventeen—her father had a lot of neighbors to dinner, and after dinner who should drop in quite casually out of the June night but little Dvorlash, the Polish gypsy, with his father big Dvorlash and his fiddle. It cost Fanny's father a thousand dollars to have the pair drop in so casually out of the June night—but this did not hurt their playing.

Big Dvorlash dropped his dirty blacksmith hands on the clean keys of the grand piano, and little Dvorlash hugged his fiddle and drew the bow across the strings and tossed the long, dirty hair back from his forehead—and became a god.

They made what Johnny Tombs called cocktail music, for which his recipe was "two-thirds laughter, one-sixth tears, and one-sixth madness." They were the greatest matchmakers—and breakers—in the world. Their music drove hesitating couples into the nearest conservatories or gardens and, just like cocktails, caused them to tell secrets.

Fanny left the big living-room, because she was afraid that she was going to cry or scream or make herself prominent in some way, and she went where the roses were thickest and sat down on a bench of white marble, and bit her lips to keep from crying.

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Even when alone she fought against crying, because when she cried she made dreadful gulpy and nosey noises that carried a long way and were dreadfully unattractive.

Presently a couple of hesitators were driven by the music into the garden. Fanny kept creepy-mouse still, not because she was a mean little eavesdropper, but because her nerves were under high tension, and she knew that if she spoke to anybody she would have hysterics.

The lovers came ever so close without speaking. The girl, as Fanny knew, hadn't a cent to her name; the man hadn't more than two good coats to his back. But when at last they began to speak to each other, Fanny knew that they were far, far richer than she.

And when they melted into each other's arms, and clung and kissed and pressed cheeks, and passed on out of sight and hearing deeper into the gardens, she was neither shocked nor scandalized, but only terribly and selfishly unhappy.

She left her bench and went a long way as fast as she could without being noisy, and came to the river where the hemlocks were thick as thieves and old as the hills. There she leaned against one of the great stems, and made noises that were a combination of a cow-moose calling to her calf and of Niobe when she wept at every pore.

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Meanwhile, in the living room all the gentlemen were getting terribly thirsty. There was a reason for this. Little Dvorlash had grown thirsty; so had big Dvorlash; and so little Dvorlash had nodded to big Dvorlash, and they had burst forth into the thirstiest drinking song without words that was ever played. And it played everybody into the dining-room, where the champagne was, and little Dvorlash, still playing and dancing as he went, brought up the rear of the procession, together with big Dvorlash, who snapped time with his giant fingers and stamped out the accents with his giant feet and with sudden wild cries of "Uha! Uha!"

The guests saw Fanny no more that night; nor did she see herself. She went to bed without calling her maid and without looking into any mirror. And she got into a very beautifully frilly French nightgown, and knew that even in that she didn't look alluring. And under a sheet she hid her stocky thick-set self—even from the eyes of the night.

She was unhappy and she was ashamed. She was unhappy because what she wanted could never come to pass; and she was ashamed because of the thing that she wanted, namely, to be loved. And by being loved, as she now understood the word, she meant to be hugged and kissed and darlined and called beautiful and worshipped and tempted. And something kept telling her that these things could never, never come

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to pass. "And, oh," she thought, "as far as love goes, I've just got to take a back seat, and I don't want to!"

II

Mr. J. B. Cavendish was just twice her age. While they were engaged he dropped the J. and prolonged the B. So that when they came out of the church all the newspapers spoke of them as Mr. and Mrs. Beekman-Cavendish.

It is well known in this country that all men are equal. Nevertheless, Beekman-Cavendish did not have quite such a well-bred way of speaking as Mr. Jack Bradfield, the gambler, say; or quite such good manners as Prudhomme, the head waiter; or quite such a wise eye for art as Snelling, the stock-broker. And so he must have made up his equality in other ways. He was thin and tall and earnest. He had never smoked. He saw no harm in going to church, though it may be doubted if upon a desert island, without witnesses, he would have been very religious. He was handsome in a thin-featured, cold way. And he must have concealed about him many little talents and touches of genius; for the minute he was married to Fanny people began to speak of his wonderful cleverness and his great promise.

Beekman-Cavendish was no mere heiress-hunter.

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He had worked hard along narrow lines, and he had achieved a narrow, hard-won success. He had always been a good citizen. If Fanny had had no money at all he could have supported her. But would he? Would he have married her in that case? No. We must admit that to these questions what we know of his character is unable to return an affirmative answer.

If he loved Fanny it was the whole Fanny that he loved, not just the shell, not just the plain, common-sense, romantic-inside Fanny, but the Fanny to whom were added as an integral part many millions of dollars. Had she known this when she had consented to marry him, or had he won her consent during a whirlwind of crocodile passion?

The truth of the matter is this: he got her alone and made a desperate effort to play the crocodile. She cut him short; said that she knew that no man would ever have a grand passion for her, and that if Cavendish wished to retain her respect he must tread a different measure. He did at once. He told her quite frankly why he wanted to marry her. He made her believe—and it was the truth at that time—that he had no vices, a great deal of honest ambition, and that he would always be kind to her. She put him on probation for a year. During that year he was always in attendance, unswervingly kind and tactful, always did or thought

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the high-minded thing, and succeeded in winning her lasting affection, her hand, and her millions.

He had promised her that he would not remain unknown. He kept that promise. A heavy contribution to the campaign fund of his party, when it was in sore need, made the incoming President think so highly of his financial ability that he offered him a seat in his cabinet. Beekman-Cavendish was no fool. He refused. And the country pointed to him as to one of its most distinguished and most disinterested patriots. Four years later the secretaryship of the treasury was again offered to him. This time he put duty ahead of desire. He said so in print; and everybody believed him. He said that whereas it was his desire to lead the quiet, unassuming life of a private citizen—and then some good things about the lime-lights that play on thrones and crickets on hearths—nevertheless, realizing that the financial condition of the country was actually precarious, he could not but listen to the clamor, and so forth, and so forth, that called him to the forefront of affairs.

Thanks to his wife's millions he knew very well that the country was going to have a great wave of prosperity. It came during the years that he held office, and was a great credit to him, and enabled him incidentally to double his wife's fortune and to become a rich man in his own right. Meanwhile the stocky and

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thick-set Fanny had borne him five healthy children. The oldest, a girl, promised to hark back to some ancestor who had been attractive. The four boys were near-sighted like their mother, but it seemed as if they might one day partake also of their father's far-sightedness.

It had never been Fanny's wish to be prominent as a hostess. It was one of those duties which her husband's prominence and success thrust upon her. He had leased a great house for her in Washington, and he spent money like water. She must have people—people all the time, he said. And she fought against her shyness and had people to lunch and to dinner, and gave musicals and dances, and kept her house full of hot-house flowers, and rare wines, and delicious foods, and ambassadors, and senators, and cabinet officers, and chairmen of committees, and high-lights of Washington society—and even mere grovelling congressmen.

Now all this constant, unremitting entertainment kept her so busy that she hadn't time to be shy. Seated in the back seat—at the head of her table—and all dressed up and bejewelled and kowtowed to, she had to talk and she had to be somebody. She had to share willy-nilly in her husband's importance, and she had to pick up this and that about politics and statecraft. And all sorts of people who came to her husband seek-

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ing favors were turned over to her, and she learned to stand between him and the great white light of being prominent when he didn't want to be. And she had to laugh at the stories to which he treated each new set of guests, as if she were hearing them for the first time. And she had to look happy and pleased and prepared to sit out half the night with any bore, when her heart was up-stairs with the baby and his sudden rise of temperature.

One night a great amateur of music came to dine. He was a great, tall Englishman who made you think of one of Arthur's Knights. And he sat at her right hand and her heart went right out to him. And she became wonderfully happy and animated. Have I said that she had a low and sweet-speaking voice? If you had heard her only and not seen her, you would have said at once: "What a charming woman!" But you saw her—and to see she became less attractive with the years. She wore beautiful clothes, but she dressed badly; and all the rice powder in France couldn't have concealed the tendency of her nose to freckle. And then there were the thick eye-glasses that she had to wear, and the sound teeth that weren't white, and the short neck, and all and all. But Sir John heard only the low sweet voice, a little shy, a little nervous, in his ear; and his great heart of a knight went right out to her, and his mind endowed her per-

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son with all the beauties of angels. But how could he do this, sitting next her at the brightly lighted table, his eyes turned toward her? He could do it, because he was blind as a stone. He could never see her as she was, only as his mind saw her. If the King of England had told him that she was ugly, he would not have believed.

He was in Washington for a week only. They met five times. To be together was rest and happiness. But she grew very tired with being awake and thinking about him. It had come, the great experience that couldn't possibly come. A man loved her with all his heart and thought that she was beautiful. That he couldn't see her did not matter in the least; for he never could. "Oh," she thought, "why didn't I wait? Why did I believe this was impossible for me? Why did I compromise with nature, and throw away all my chances of happiness in this world and the next?" And she wept bitterly. And she wept silently. And this was a miracle, for never before had she been able to cry without noise.

They parted without having declared themselves to each other; and for a time life was as dust in her mouth. Half a dozen months passed, and she had news of his death somewhere in South California. A little later a photograph of him came by registered mail. There was no writing on it or with it; nothing but the

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likeness of her blind knight. And her romance was all over.

But by no means the effect of it upon her future life. She had had that which is owing to all women, whether they are plain or beautiful. And the experience and the tragic triumph of it caused her nature to change in subtle ways. It was as if she had gone to bed nobody and risen up somebody. People who came to the house realized this change without realizing that they did. Old men brought her state secrets and public worries. Young men brought her ambitions and love-affairs. And women gave her their friendship. She was no longer an ugly, dumpy little woman oppressed with grandeur and millions. She was a low, sweet voice and a benignant, honest, understanding mind. Into the new depths of her character the unprepossessing personality had sunk and vanished. You never thought about her looks any more, or the expensive clothes in which she was so badly dressed. You thought rather: "What a fine and friendly person!"

At this time it began to be whispered—not, of course, in the newspapers, which still gloried in Beekman-Cavendish, the great secretary, the prince of entertainers, but among wise men in high places—that all that glitters is not necessarily gold. It was whispered that Beekman-Cavendish was not really a great man, not really a continent man, nor a temperate one. It

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was whispered that he had in his employ a young man who in the pregnant American was "the whole show." That he himself was nothing but a press agent backed by unlimited means. That he had not achieved greatness, or been born great, or had it thrust upon him, but that he had advertised himself into it. It was whispered further that he was much too fond of the ladies and that he was a secret drinker.

These things, then, were whispered less as facts than as amusing and plausible speculations. But Fanny for a long time now had known them to be facts. The thought of other women did not make her jealous. It hurt her pride merely and disgusted her. The secret drinking troubled her immensely, for it was pretty sure, sooner or later, to lead to open scandal.

From the first Beekman-Cavendish had taken a great pride in giving his guests the most delicious wines that money could buy; and, although not a drinking man, he developed gradually into a most accomplished taster and buyer. The pleasure of discriminating tasting grew upon him, and one day he came from his cellars quite drunk and foolish. Nobody saw him in this condition, and he had the good sense left to go to his room and sleep it off. On another occasion Fanny found him sleeping heavily and not to be waked. Having a perfectly innocent mind, she sent for the doctor. News of the great man's illness and of the

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doctor's coming leaked out through the servants' quarters, and it became current gossip that he had a disposition toward heart trouble. Overwork, said the newspapers, was all that was the matter with their great man. And he went from bad to worse. He learned to drink more and to carry his liquor better. Nobody of his own sex ever saw him take a drink, but it was seldom too early in the morning for him to have had several. Fortunately he had the young secretary, Harry Brand, to see that he did not make an official fool of himself; and he had all the reporters and correspondents to keep his greatness ever in the public eye.

His party was again elected into power, and Beekman-Cavendish was offered the portfolio of state. An anxious country and a more legitimately anxious wife hung upon his answer. Fanny begged him not to accept. She told him frankly that if ever he had been fit to be a public servant, he was so no longer. "Suppose anything happened to Harry Brand," she said, "what could you do?"

She didn't mince matters in the least, and she gave the great man an evil half-hour. But he would not listen to common sense, for he was also drunk with his own position and greatness.

He let the public know that it was once more his dearest wish to retire into private life, to "cultivate his acres," to "read the works of master minds," to "listen

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to the cricket on the hearth"; but since duty once more called him to the helm, and so on, and so on.

"Harry," said Mrs. Beekman-Cavendish to her husband's invaluable secretary, "I suppose you know that Mr. Cavendish could not possibly get along without you?"

Harry Brand looked surprised, almost bewildered. This was his way of saying that he knew it very well—indeed, rather better than anybody else could know it.

"I wish," Mrs. Cavendish said, hesitating a little, "that in the future you would talk everything over with me, too. I will make it my business to understand. You see you might get sick, or married, or something, and then—there ought to be two of us."

Harry Brand smiled very winningly. "I'll tell you anything I know," he said, "and give you books to read, if you like. I—I think I understand you very exactly, Mrs. Cavendish."

"Is it," she said, "going to be very hard?"

He shook his head and laughed.

"Mrs. Cavendish," he said, "statecraft isn't even mysterious. An able-minded child—" He stopped short.

"An able-minded child," she thought. "Yes—but not Beekman-Cavendish!"

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III

It was just as Mrs. Cavendish had feared. Harry Brand fell head over ears in love, and not only insisted on getting married, which was bad, but on going south for a honeymoon.

Fortunately the nations were at peace. In the Balkans all was quiet. Nobody was teasing China. Japan was out of pocket. The Latin-American republics as usual were quarrelling and revolutionizing, but strictly in private. John Bull and Uncle Sam were embracing each other and kissing each other in public, for all the world like a Frenchman and his son—in short, there was no need in Washington of a secretary of state.

Harry Brand, knowing this better than anybody, married and went upon his honeymoon. But he and his bride had no sooner reached Nassau than things began to happen. The first Harry knew of them was a cable in cipher.

“For heaven’s sake come back at once and oblige your harassed friend, Fanny Cavendish.”

Harry had a dull headache, but he started at once for Washington, reached Key West, came down with a long-postponed attack of typhoid, and so telegraphed the state department. The same day his wife told

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him that Beekman-Cavendish was also down with typhoid.

Harry smiled: "Then," he said, "I can be sick in peace!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the secretary's wife is a better man than the secretary, my excellent Gunga Din! But some day I shall be secretary of state myself, and you shall flirt with the ambassadors and worm their secrets out of them."

And he whistled a good deal, like a jolly Irishman, until he became too sick to whistle or think.

What had happened was this: out of a clear sky a great, black, raucous war cloud had risen between Mexico and the United States. The situation required the greatest firmness, delicacy, and tact, added to a slightly pedagogic and even bullying attitude.

Fanny wrote to the Chief Executive:

"My dear Mr. President:

"My husband is too sick to see any one; but he foresaw the present emergency, and frequently discussed in my hearing the procedures by which he thought it should be met. May I come to see you?

"Sincerely yours,

"FANNY CAVENDISH."

The President telephoned that she could not come to see him, but that he would come at once to see her.

They had a long talk. The President had very posi-

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tive ideas of his own on the Mexican situation. Fanny showed him wherein his ideas were mistaken. And she kept quoting her husband—it was really Harry Brand she quoted; and when memory and quotations failed her she began, almost to her horror, to think, invent, and speak for herself.

When the President came he was an anxious man; when he left he wore a gardenia that she had pinned in his coat at parting, and a relieved, amused smile. They were not only going to meet the Mexican situation expediently, but with an element of humor that would mean many votes at the next Presidential election.

For six weeks the President and Mrs. Beekman-Cavendish saw each other daily; and the Mexican war cloud was as wax in their hands. But the newspapers said that each day the great secretary saw his chief and transacted business. It might be the death of him, they said, but his own conscience, an admiring world—and so on, and so on.

The two conspirators smiled and let the lie stand.

One day the President said: "But your husband couldn't possibly have foreseen this, and yet you speak as if——"

"I know my husband's mind as thoroughly as if it were my own," Fanny explained.

"Do you?" exclaimed the President somewhat gently. And he added gravely: "The main thing is that you

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know your own mind, and that I am beginning to know it. If I were ever President again, and if the constitution would permit me, do you know to whom I would offer the portfolio of state, or of the treasury, or the navy, or of any other thing that I thought she might accept?"

"No, I don't," said Fanny. "Now, in the treaty of '69——"

For six weeks, though it never came out, and she sat in the backest of back seats, and her sick husband got all the credit, she was in everything but name the secretary of state.

When her first frights were over she began to enjoy herself and to acquire a thirst for power and influence. She began even to look into the future, to wonder if it would not be possible, her husband's drink habit cured, for her to be President behind the throne. If she needed advice there was always Harry Brand. Credit she did not seek. She had always sat in the back seat; she always would. But power, influence, the play of her mind, and the grasp of it, the consciousness that if she were a man she would be a great man and an honest one—these things had grown dear to her.

One day she received a telegram in cipher. She got out the code-book and read this simple message:

"Bully for you!"

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And then she wiped the tears from her amused and delighted eyes and said something about "*Dear Harry.*"

And she sat not quite in the back seat, for here was recognition and praise from one who knew, from one who had seen the recent workings of the state department as clearly as if he had been present, and who was keen enough to place credit where credit was due.

In those moments she tasted homage and felt within her heart and mind the growth of immense ambitions. Beekman-Cavendish must be made to behave himself. Already a popular idol, there was no position beyond his reach. She mustn't forget that. Even if he was really a nonentity, he was immensely useful in all her schemes. Indeed, she couldn't do anything without him. But as a team, he supplying the set speeches and the handshakes, and she the money and the brains—ay, and the thoughtfulness and the kindness!—as a team! Of course, during their lifetime the truth would never be known, but in history, oh, in history, they would do her justice! In history she would sit, not in a box, perhaps, but somewhere down in front, on an aisle——

A trained nurse rushed nervously into the room, stumbling on the head of a polar bear and almost falling.

"Oh, Mrs. Cavendish, come quick, your husband is dying!"

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IV

An hour later the President called officially. The day after the funeral—and the world was still ringing with the greatness of Beekman-Cavendish, and the newspapers were bemoaning the loss of him—he called in person.

He presented her very gravely with a loving-cup of gold, on which was engraved the following mystery of letters:

T. T. B. S. O. S. T. E. S., F. T. M. G. P.

"You see," he said, "nobody ever ought to know the truth. They are saying that your poor husband killed himself over the Mexican trouble. We mustn't rob him of that glory, must we? The letters on this little souvenir of our work together stand for the following words:

"To the best secretary of state that ever served, from the most grateful President."

She took the cup by its two handles and looked at the letters and began to cry and, her knees weakening, she sat down abruptly in the nearest chair.

So the President left her, alone with the memento of her little day of glory—alone with that, with Harry Brand's telegram in cipher saying, "Bully for you"; alone with the knowledge that the theatre of life was once more crowded to its capacity and that for her

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there was nothing better reserved, henceforth and forever, than one of the back seats.

Yes, as the papers kept reiterating, the loss of Beekman-Cavendish was one of the greatest losses his grateful country could possibly have sustained. For without him, in spite of all her millions, Fanny Cavendish could do nothing.

